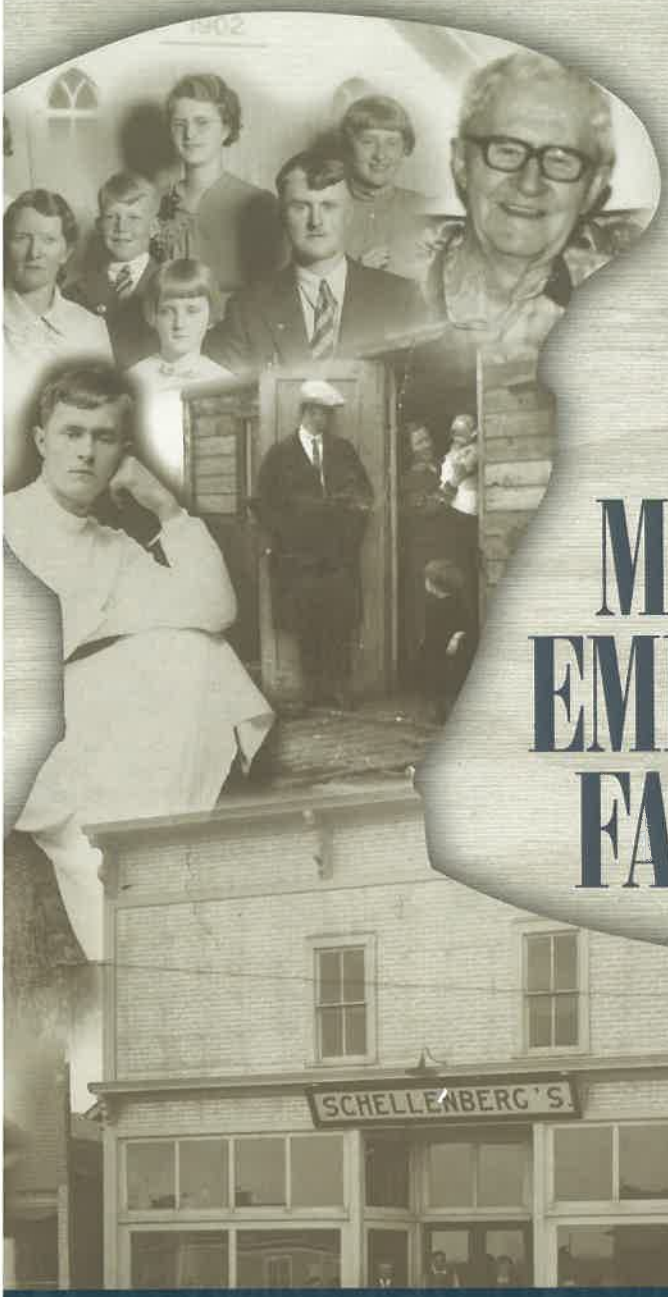

MY EMIGRANT FATHER

Jacob J. Funk, 1896–1986

A MEMOIR BY

Katie Funk Wiebe

"Once again, the storekeeper's daughter has mined her rich store of family stories to explore universal themes of love and loss and yearning. *My Emigrant Father* is an example of what Katie Funk Wiebe does so well when she explores how meaning is made and identity formed and reformed."

—**Valerie G. Rempel**, professor, Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary

"Katie Funk Wiebe tells the whole immigrant story, the bad times and the good. She writes especially to honor her father, Jacob Johann Funk, placing his story into the larger historical context. After the golden years in Russia came turmoil and suffering that led to the family's uprooting. Grounded in their Christian faith, Jacob, store owner and church leader in Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan, and Anna, hard working mother of five children, adapted well to life in Canada, despite new obstacles. In a very readable style and with bits of humor, Katie creates a full and vivid picture of Jacob and Anna's long lives, allowing the reader to relive their experiences. The recipes with Low German titles at the end of each chapter bring authenticity and realism to the book, especially when Katie describes how she continues to use them."

—**Linda Huebert Hecht**, author of *Women in Early Austrian Anabaptism: Their Days, Their Stories*

"Katie Funk Wiebe's extended eulogy to her father in these pages is affectionate, honest, and compelling. It unfolds in stories—stories about ghosts, tragic deaths, family separation like "a toothache in the heart," uprooting from one country, re-rooting in the next. Wiebe's quest to understand this ordinary yet remarkable man who influenced her so deeply, and her willingness to reveal the burdens both "light and heavy" of their bond, are a wonderful inspiration. Through her words, I too am moved to honor my past."

—**Dora Dueck**, author of *This Hidden Thing* and *What You Get at Home*

"Katie Funk Wiebe knows how to tell a good story. As she follows the steps of her father, she portrays the journey of a people who suffer incredibly but who also find new life. This is a story of poignant memories, deep scars, and desperate hope. Vivid, engaging, honest, and thoughtful—*My Emigrant Father* is hard to put down."

—**Doug Heidebrecht**, co-editor of *The Voice of a Writer: Honoring the Life of Katie Funk Wiebe*

"*My Emigrant Father* is much more than a memoir. It is a comprehensive revelation of Russian Mennonite history in general and Jacob J. Funk's life in particular, a resource to be studied and treasured. This book is a buffet of foundational facts, personal anecdotes, and author commentary, seasoned with recipes and visualized through photos, trimmed with citations for verification and further study."

—**Janice L. Dick**, author of Mennonite historical fiction, the three-book *Storm* series

"Don't be fooled—this is not just a family history or a devoted daughter's tribute to her father. It is a living Mennonite diorama seen through the prism of a prairie storekeeper. You'll be a bystander to history as you walk with Russian Mennonites and feel the texture and rhythm of life and faith popping from the page with lively detail. You'll cringe at the terror of revolutionary uprooting and the chaos of emigration to Canada where an uneasy new life awaits with struggles of its own but also opportunity, resilience, even nobility. This is Mennonite drama at its best, deftly and vibrantly told by one of its most cherished writers."

—**Wally Kroeker**, editor of *The Marketplace*

"The accomplished storyteller, Katie Funk Wiebe, writes about her father as someone who left his European homeland, rather than someone who arrived as an immigrant. The distinction is important; the points of departure are Holland, Poland, Prussia, Russia, and Saskatchewan. Jacob J. Funk (1896–1986) is the emigrant whose people are always leaving rather than arriving. Born in 1924, Katie is able to reach far back to capture a textured oral history that spans church squabbles and family drama, artistically weaving it into a well-researched memoir. The clever addition of Mennonite recipes in each chapter tells a parallel story of sustenance and food that accompanies Jacob J. Funk and his descendants on their journey."

—**Jake Buhler**, Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan

My Emigrant Father

My Emigrant Father

Jacob J. Funk, 1896–1986

a memoir by

Katie Funk Wiebe

Winnipeg, MB

Goessel, KS

My emigrant father: Jacob J. Funk, 1896–1986

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Published simultaneously by Kindred Productions, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3Z6 and Kindred Productions, Goessel, Kansas 67053.

Cover design by Audrey Plew.

Printed in Canada by CP Printing Solutions, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3Y1.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Wiebe, Katie Funk, author
My emigrant father : Jacob J. Funk, 1896–1986 : a memoir / by Katie Funk Wiebe.

ISBN 978-1-894791-41-0 (pbk.)

1. Funk, Jacob J., 1896–1986. 2. Immigrants--Canada--Biography. 3. Russian Canadians--Biography. 4. Christian biography. I. Title.

FC106.R9W54 2015 971'.00470092 C2015-901097-7

International Standard Book Number: 978-1-894791-41-0

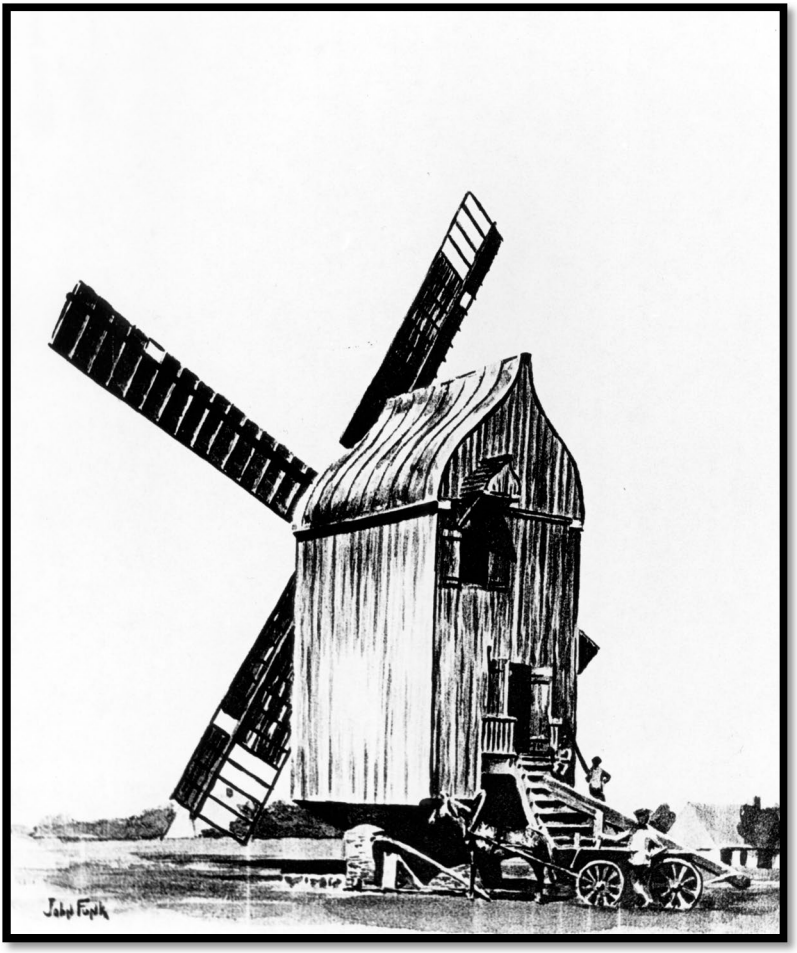
Visit our website: www.kindredproductions.com

for every emigrant who left one home
to search for another

In my mind I have written a book about my father often. Over the years I have asked myself what I will say to those who come after me about this man and his family, whose lives placed a burden on me at once both light and heavy.

Take from the altar of the past, the fire, not the ashes.

JEAN JUARES



The Funk windmill and house in Rosenthal, Ukraine, purchased by Johann Jacob Funk, my father's father, in 1904 for 3,000 rubles. It was destroyed in 1926. This painting of the mill was made by my uncle, John Funk.

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1

How this story about my father began

During my last visits to my parents, then living in Edmonton, Alberta, there was less and less of the kind of stuff scholars now call oral history. Earlier visits had been full of rich reminiscences of the early years in Russia, and Blaine Lake or Bruno, Saskatchewan. In the later years, after I returned to Kansas and I thought through the hours we had spent together, mostly sitting and talking, memories rushed in how I, the middle child of five, spent countless hours as my Dad's Saturday helper in the store everyone called "Funk's store." It wasn't a shop. It was a store. Dad and I enjoyed a pleasant camaraderie without words. He liked hard workers. I was a hard worker. My siblings did the same before and after me.

Back home after a visit, seated at my desk, I allowed my thoughts to wander. I saw again the vigorous man who reveled in his ability to carry 100-pound sacks of flour on his shoulder down the front steps of the store to the waiting car or wagon on the street. The man who whistled cheerfully as he moved quickly from task to task, whether it was dusting shelves or spraying the lettuce. The man who was easily caught up with a love of the ingenious. He sketched schemes for perpetual motion machines and studied the way the pyramids in Egypt might have been erected. The man who preached with *gewalt*—with passion. These images replaced those of the stooped, silent, anxious man I had just visited, in trousers too big for him years ago now held up by suspenders resting on his too-thin shoulders. When had the glory departed? Why?

Only in recent years did I see the rough bark and crooked branches of individual trees instead of the forest. Now I could ponder the Funk family's influence on my life—especially my father's—and examine why my conscience nagged me for decades to write more about them.

I write this not to honor him for his boldness, although at times he willingly took on leadership roles. I honor him not because he showed

me the way to wealth and success. Making money was never his goal, although at times he wished he had more. He died with only a modest inheritance to pass on to us children.

I write this not to let others know how he sacrificed for us children. When he gave away money or groceries from the store as if it was his to give away, it was never a hardship, but a natural thing to do. When people were in need you helped and paid the bill yourself.

I honor him by writing about his life and those who came before him because they are part of me. We share a family history, a church history, a community history. Time and life are continuous. His life continues in me as his father's did in him and mine does in my children.

* * * * *

My parents, Jacob and Anna Funk, conceived me on a hard-slatted bed, in a small squatter's cabin in Laird, Saskatchewan, in the land of freedom. I was born in 1924, one year after Mother and Dad and my sisters Frieda and Annie arrived in Canada from southern Russia. Our family was poor, but Dad had a job. He and Mother had faith they would survive.

My father had many admirable qualities. He admired punctuality, thoroughness, and excellence in others, and especially honesty and promise-keeping. He yearned for harmony in his life, the church, and society. He decried the violence of war and the wounds it caused on body and spirit. He had experienced the aftermath of violent combat firsthand for several years as a medical orderly on a Russian Red Cross hospital train during World War I. He found that period of his life hard to talk about. But he objected equally to a couple of young boys or men slugging it out in the alley, or a husband beating his wife. Violence created pain at many levels. He wanted no part of it. But where did this quality come from?

He struggled with how to handle disunity and conflict at all levels, whether in our family home, the church in Blaine Lake, the church across the river, or in that less defined area of larger church bodies. Ecclesiastical posturing bothered him. I recognize I inherited some of his puzzlements about life, especially when change confronts tradition, such as when an existing theological interpretation is challenged. Issues about biblical interpretation engaged his attention even after retirement, as seen in his long letters. He knew these issues also interested me. I wonder how many hours he spent pondering the meaning of life,

especially in the later years when he had too much time on his hands and not enough day-to-day encounters with people to occupy his active mind.

He knew firsthand that life wasn't fair, yet he struggled to make it fair for others. He was generous with his money, almost to a fault and particularly to people with obvious needs. He never learned to openly show or speak his feelings, so love often took the form of a gift casually handed over or left behind in an odd corner to be found after he was gone. He relished buying things for others he thought might give them special joy, even when Mother scolded him, saying the money was needed for more pressing concerns. But that was not his way. He bought first and never apologized after. He came home one day with new dirndl dresses purchased from Lubin's dry goods store, one for each of us three older girls. I was overjoyed at my first store-bought dress; Mother, not so happy. He probably had bought them to offset a debt of some kind or to repay a kindness. Did this generosity come out of nowhere?

I never saw my father saunter. When he and my little red-haired mother walked together somewhere, he was usually a good three paces ahead of her. She'd mutter, "Don't rush so." He'd look back, perplexed, hesitate, and say, "I'm not rushing," which was true, for he was going at his regular pace. He'd keep walking fast, looking neither to the right nor the left. He had to know whatever was there to be known, and become involved, especially if involvement meant hard work like pushing, pulling, carrying, or dragging. He liked that. If involvement required nice words, fancy handshaking, and backslapping, he retreated. Why?

When I started writing on behalf of the greater usage of women's gifts in the church, he cautioned, "If you go against the wind, Katie, you'll get sand and dust in your face." He knew about life's storms, for he had often stood in the midst of life's disrupted and changing patterns. He cautioned me: Always remember you are a Funk. Be proud of your name, he wrote.

Only in later years did I think to ask him how he had become a Christ-believer, an important part of his life. To my surprise, I learned that his turnaround had occurred while he had been a conscientious objector serving as a medic in the Russian army during World War I. Pacifism was church tradition, not necessarily personal faith, and he fell in line. He grew burdened by his sinful condition before God while involved daily with death, sorrow, and despair on the Russian front and, later, after he had nearly died of typhus. He wanted peace of mind. That he could be born again came as a glorious revelation; it was relief from the burden that weighed on his soul, giving direction to his life. Yet he wasn't hung up on everyone having a crisis conversion like his own.

Jacob Funk in army medic attire with a group of people in front of a Russian field hospital kitchen of which he was manager. He is #6 and about 21 years old at the time.

Once, as we sat together in my parents' retirement home in Clearbrook, British Columbia, I asked him to tell me about his favorite sermon. He had been ordained as deacon and evangelist in Ukraine, and for many years after coming to Canada he preached in German in the Laird Mennonite Brethren Church across the river, or in Russian in the Russian Baptist Church in Blaine Lake. Without hesitation, he recalled most of that sermon, point for point. How often had he rehearsed it in his mind in the years after his voice became silent? I found the rough notes for this sermon in his well-thumbed Bible after he died. What factors guided his spiritual development?

His text for that favorite sermon was from John 3:8, "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

As we talked that afternoon in their simple home on Fir Avenue, I knew he was back in Rosenthal, in Ukraine, in his father's windmill on the high hill at the end of the village. He had grown up as a miller's son. Each son in turn learned to sharpen the two-yard wide millstone and to operate the mill, just as each of us children learned to serve customers and fill shelves. Because each wind has its own characteristics, a miller in Ukraine had to know the winds intimately to make them work for him. In British Columbia, my father in his old age often sat and watched the

wind circle down the valley, winds so unlike those of his youth. But in the Saskatchewan prairies, where he had spent about forty years, the winds were the same as in Russia.

"I never knew when the West wind would begin, for it starts slowly," he told me. "I would wet my finger and turn it in the air to feel the wind even before I could see branches moving. When it cooled my finger, I knew it was time to prepare the blades of the mill. The West wind would be steady, dependable for several days at a time.

"But like this West wind, many people cannot say the exact time of their spiritual birth. Though you can't see the wind, you can feel it. You can see its activity—the branches waving. You can't see the Spirit working in a life, producing the new birth, but you can see the deeds of the Spirit." He was becoming involved in his own story. This verse was at the heart of his beliefs. *You can't predetermine the working of the Spirit of God.*

He compared the South wind to Christians who start their Christian life well, but then suddenly change direction to go their own way. The South wind worked well during the day, but then stopped suddenly at nightfall and blew hard from the opposite direction. He warned against being a South wind believer.

The stormy East wind often blew many directions at once, making it an unsatisfactory wind to harness for the mill. Some believers are like this wind—directionless—experiencing confusion as a result. East winds are not good winds.

The North wind, which blew long and strong for weeks in the southern steppes of Russia, would lose its strength when warm spring weather arrived. Similarly, prosperity saps the strength of fair-weather Christians, he said.

That sermon encapsulated his life philosophy. The West wind had stirred something in his spirit years ago, as a young man.

"You look like him, Katie," someone once said to me. Along with his physical characteristics, I hope that I have passed along his inquiring attitude, giving spirit, and spiritual sensitivity to my children.

When I visited my parents, I often took notes on our talks together. My father liked finding his way back to the Russia of his childhood, where he fished for sprats, chased mad dogs with the older boys of the village, and picked watermelon from the large patch at the back of the house.

Over the years he also wrote me many letters. Many, of course, were very short, not intended to pass on information but to keep communication open. They intimated, "I know you're there, Katie. We

haven't forgotten you." Occasionally he wrote longer letters responding to something I had written in a publication or relating something he and Mother had recently experienced. Sometimes the same ideas appeared in two or three letters in quick succession. I tried to write a letter every week, possibly because I knew how lonely life can get. He was always grateful for letters, photographs, even collect phone calls—anything.

Rather than throw all these letters away, I kept them and my many notes in files labeled "Dad's Letters" or "Dad's Stories." No letters were ever dated, so I can't always tell when they were written. I am gleaning them and my memory as well as memoirs written by family members to put together this account of the Funk family through several generations, and the details of my father's life as I and others have seen it. I found I could not tell my father's story without also telling his family's story. To understand both myself and him, I had to know the whole story. And so I began collecting, talking, researching. This account tells me the legacy I received from this branch of the family that dared to move from country to country because it was just what you did when life became impossible. This is a story about beginnings and endings. It is my gift to my children and grandchildren.

Kjlietamooss

In my father's and my childhood, soup was often a meal in itself. Recipes were in the cook's head, never on paper, so ingredients were eye-measured and taste-tested. This soup was my father's favorite because it reminded him of his mother and Mother Russia and of a blissful childhood near the Dnieper River. As he listened to songs like "Carry me back to old Virginia," he was thinking of the Dnieper River and life in the house by the windmill.

* * * * *

Bring 3 cups of milk, more or less, to a boil, and add salt to taste.

In a bowl, mix 4 rounded tablespoons of flour, 1 egg, and a 1/3 to ½ cup of milk, a teaspoon at a time, mixing or rubbing the dough with your hands into pea-sized crumbs.

When the milk begins to boil, add the crumbs gradually, about one teaspoon at a time. Allow to come to a boil and simmer for a few minutes before removing from heat. Add sugar, if desired. Enjoy—especially if your heritage is Russian Mennonite.

2

"What are we, Dad, Dutch or German—maybe Russian?"

A course in history at the feeling, not just factual, level should be prescribed for every person, old or young—getting first-hand understandings of the darkness of a political prisoner's cell, the despair at an unjust law, the emptiness of exile, the anguish at watching a child die of starvation, the struggle to make a home in a new culture. That is real history, for it delves into the hidden corners not revealed or disturbed by authorized accounts. History produced by historians, consisting mostly of dates, names, and places, and decisions made by boards and committees, and the results of wars and conflicts, does not take into consideration history's underside. Turn over any stone and its bottom surface is crawling with insects unseen from above.

My father knew much about Mennonite church history, but mostly from this underside, the feeling level. In his growing-up years he never felt included in top-level decisions. He didn't tell me that, but rather conveyed it through stories of his experiences.

He knew that the Mennonites had come from Holland originally. The Mennonite church was named for former Catholic priest Menno Simons, but he was not my father's concern. Neither were other early leaders such as Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and George Blaurock, so important to modern Anabaptists. After decades of his interacting with the Mennonite church first in southern Russia and then in Canada, and in various forms and levels, what stayed with him were harsh archetypal images of division and separation, not a search for truth and unity.

Yes, it was true: Mennonites had pulled away from the state church in the 1500s, even as Protestants took a firm stance against anything that militated against freedom of conscience. I learned these details later on as an adult. I don't recall ever hearing my father talk about Anabaptism.

The term *Wiedertaeufer* (again-baptizers) as used by the Mennonite Brethren he could understand. Young people in the traditional Mennonite congregations were usually baptized just before marriage. Those who had a "born-again" experience in the Mennonite villages under the influence of evangelistic preaching were baptized a second time by immersion to show their faith. According to his mother's family register, my father was baptized only once, by immersion, in the Dnieper River in 1918 after his "born-again" experience in the Mennonite Brethren Church. Marriage wasn't yet in his sights.

"We are Dutch," he told us children emphatically. "Our name used to be Funck—maybe even van Funcke…" He hinted proudly at a touch of nobility.

"Okay, Dad, but we're speaking German, not Dutch, not even Low German, which is closer to Dutch than High German." And as it turns out, the origin of the Funk name is German, likely brought by German Mennonites migrating east, mixing with Dutch Mennonites who had also immigrated to Poland (parts of which later came under German rule and became known as Prussia) in search of economic opportunity and religious freedom shortly after the Anabaptist movement began.

Dad and Mother also knew Russian and a smattering of some other Slavic languages. Low German (*Plautdietsch*) was my home language until I began grade school, when I switched to English. Mother wanted to learn English. As a Canadian businessman, Dad had to learn English. The tide turned rapidly. Mother's gentle persuasion—an offer of a purse at the end of summer if we dropped Low German for only English—was the clincher.

Our weak High German faded as we became more and more Canadian, rubbing elbows with children of many nationalities in our small community, most with immigrant parents all pushing to get ahead in this new land, wanting to speak English well and not be called a "dumb immigrant." We were Canadians, therefore we spoke English.

While language is no longer much of an issue in Mennonite congregations, it has been a hot issue almost resulting in blows—at least verbal ones—in the history of the Mennonites, and especially in Canada, when each new wave of Mennonites coming from Europe reinforced the German. To maintain the German language despite living in an English-speaking country was important to some Mennonite leaders. Language is the carrier of culture, including faith, and to lose the German meant the possible loss of the Mennonite culture carefully nurtured over several centuries. God spoke to them most clearly in the language they loved,

understood, and had spoken since leaving Prussia for Russia in the late 1700s.

Nickolai and Elizabeth Peters, with daughters, 1878. The daughter standing, Susanna, became Jacob Funk's mother and my grandmother. The other daughter, Margaretha, married Abram D. Schellenberg, who migrated to Canada ahead of the Funk family and became their benefactor.

In Holland, one of the Mennonite points of origin, new believers spoke Dutch and a version of Low German, but when the Anabaptists were driven out, they found protection under Polish rule in the Danzig area of Poland (now Gdansk) and made the transition to another Low

German dialect that was common in the area; although they continued to use Dutch in their worship services. For almost a century and a half Low German worked its way into the linguistic identity of the Mennonites. Only after German expansion in the 18th century, when parts of Poland came under German Prussian rule, did Mennonites begin to use High German. Even so, High German remained a "second" language for Mennonites, used in schools and churches, preserving Low German as the language of the hearth and home.[1]

Language, even as it has been the means of uniting a people, has always also been the great divider. The Dutch language was replaced with the Low German in daily life and High German in church and formal occasions, just as English later replaced the High and Low German in Mennonite homes and churches in Canada and the United States.

The first High German sermon in the Danzig Mennonite Church was preached on September 19, 1762.[2] The minister had to receive permission to use High German instead of Dutch, against much opposition. After he finished, a listener commented, "Because we weren't accustomed to his preaching, he didn't get much affirmation." Unless the teachings from the pulpit were handed out using familiar religious idioms, the people couldn't understand them. Different nuances of meaning emerged when the language changed. On January 1, 1771, another minister ventured to preach in High German. These two men were instrumental in bringing the Danzig Mennonites in line with the High German already being spoken by other Mennonites in their churches further up the Vistula River Valley.[3]

By the time the Mennonites were considering leaving Prussia for Russia in the late 1700s, the daily language was Low German; and High German, though still a relatively new dialect for them, was used to a degree in church services and in formal education. Had the Mennonites migrated seventy-five years earlier from Prussia, they might have continued to use Dutch in their new land, and not High German. And I might know some Dutch today. And maybe the arguments in Canada's immigrant Mennonite churches about language during the 1940s and 1950s would have been less intense.

Low German remained the beloved language of certain groups of Mennonites long after their migrations to Canada, the United States,

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[1] Rueben Epp, *The Story of Low German and Plautdietsch: Tracing a Language Across the Globe* (The Readers Press, 1993), 58.

[2] Cornelius Krahn and Al Reimer, "Dialect Literature and Speech, Low German," in *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* or *GAMEO* (1989).

[3] Epp, *The Story of Low German*, 72.

Europe, South America, and elsewhere. It was cherished, revered, and used for all manner of informal communication. Although not primarily a written language, its multitude of nuances of meaning endeared it to its speakers. If God spoke any language, it had to have been Low German, that sparkling jewel in the crown of all languages. I remember how relatives, after greeting each other in High German, soon shifted to Low German to do real visiting. Now they could get down to the vital stuff. It was the Mennonite heart language.

The Mennonites spent 250 years (1540–1790) in Poland—although most of their area was annexed by Prussia in 1772—reclaiming swampy regions of river lowlands. Even with the protection of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia (1772–1786), they were outsiders. They were forbidden to proselytize. They built dikes to retain flood waters and became prosperous. Neighbors were jealous of their royal protection and affluence. Frederick had originally given the Mennonites religious freedom, but eventually withdrew this right and also the privilege of buying additional land. They began to look for a new home.

Already in Holland, because of cultural and possibly geographic differences, the Mennonites had divided into Flemish and Frisian congregations; these divisions they carried with them to Poland.[4] Here I am getting to really important stuff. This division created social groups—and snobbery. And we've returned to history's underside again and my father's awareness of the deep emotional struggles. The two groups squabbled from 1560 until well into their Russian sojourn, where the disagreements continued. In 1836, while already in Russia, plans for the resettlement of landless Mennonites from the Old Colony (Chortitza) were put in motion, but only families of the Flemish persuasion were chosen to settle the new Bergthal Colony to prevent inter-faction strife.

A big concern was level of spirituality. The Frisians accused the Flemish of being worldly in their choice of clothing; the Flemish accused the Frisians of being worldly regarding their style of houses and furnishings. They differed in mode of baptism—the Frisians sprinkled, the Flemish poured. Sometimes Frisians had to be rebaptized to join larger Flemish churches even though they had a joint confession of faith in the 19th century.[5] This squabbling pattern repeated itself later in North America with other Mennonite bodies.

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[4] See Hermann Gottlieb Mannhardt, "Danzig Mennonite Church (Gdansk, Poland)," in *GAMEO* (2012); and Epp, *The Story of Low German*, 72.

[5] See Christian Neff and Nanne van der Zijpp, "Frisian Mennonites," *GAMEO* (1956); and Christian Neff and Nanne van der Zijpp, "Flemish Mennonites," *GAMEO* (1956).

Modes of baptism continued to be debated between groups of Mennonites well into the 20th century in Canada and the United States. In Hillsboro, Kansas, where my family lived for several decades, the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren and the Mennonite Brethren argued about whether it was more scriptural to baptize facing forwards or facing backwards. The number of times a candidate was dunked was also an issue—a big issue. *What fools these mortals be*, Shakespeare once wrote.

In Canada, especially Ontario, when my husband and I were living there, the issue was whether Mennonite Brethren could accept people, particularly members of the *Allianz* church, who had been baptized in Russia upon their faith by a different method than immersion. Some said they could participate in worship and communion if they hadn't been dipped under, but not hold office or serve in visible capacities. What a headache.

Yes, the fences between the groups were high and tangible in Poland/Prussia and later, in southern Russia—and later even in Canada and the United States. The Flemish and the Frisians weren't actual organizational entities within the larger Mennonite church with membership lists, but more like political blocs or parties. Think of it like the conservative right and liberal left in today's political world, each promoting their own ideals. Although they didn't openly say so, the issue was clearly about who was more spiritual. Who walked closer to God? The ones in fancy clothes or the ones in fancy houses?

When people asked what kind of Funks they were, Dad's father would say, "Kronsweider Funks," which meant Frisian. Kronsweide was the village in which the family had settled when they came to Ukraine in the late 1700s, a village within the Old Colony (Chortitza) settlement. However, his mother's family was "Chortitza Peters," which meant Flemish. That statement moved the family a notch up the social ladder. The Flemish baptized using more water, therefore the final product was more genuine. But who was doing the measuring in each case? When the Mennonite Brethren formed about 1860, they used even more water—they immersed the whole person. What could be more spiritual? But I'm getting ahead of myself.

When my father's family moved to the village of Rosenthal, they attended the largely Flemish Chortitza Mennonite church. But Frisians were still considered *bekuemmerte*, or ones to be pitied, a lower class considered of lesser quality: coarse, low-brow, less progressive. The Flemish thought themselves elite. Well, it depended on whose eyes you were looking through. Dad still felt like a Frisian. Changing stripes isn't that easy.

In 1974, at age 80, church division was still the pebble in his shoe. *Regarding Mennonite origins: I say it is not biblical to call us Mennonite after a religion or a man's name, like Luther or Menno. An MB church formed in Russia in 1860 in the village of Kronsweide, Old Colony. My grandfather, Jacob Funk, lived in that village at that time. He told us many stories about the old Mennonite church. It was the Frisian church. Baptism was done with two hands together (japs, in Low German), taking up water and sprinkling it on the head of the person being baptized. No person could get married without being baptized first. No person could marry outside the church. How do you like that? To be fenced in like that?*

The other Old Colony church was the one my mother's parents, my grandparents, belonged to—the Flemish church. They baptized with a pitcher of water, instead of two hands. But they had the same rules or fences to keep people separate. But my father jumped the fence from the Frisian church to the Flemish church because he fell in love with a girl from that church, Susanna Peters, who became my mother.[6]

This tension, which resulted in church divisions, was deeply rooted in my father's soul growing up. After all, church conflict, then as now, made for lively discussion in the twilight hours when the farm work was done and Mennonite neighbors sat outside in the front yard to enjoy the evening air—and to talk. And talk. Without telephones, radios, newspapers, or television, "neighboring," a good Low German word that defies translation, was the main pastime. Whatever world news was brought into the village was quickly passed on through neighborly visits. As a child growing up, I remember that when a guest was about to leave, the host would remonstrate and say, "*Daut nobat noch so scheen*" (The conversation is still great. Let's not quit so soon).

Class consciousness infiltrated my grandmother's thinking, according to Dad's younger brother Peter. It bothered her that her family was only of the *anwohner* class, landless cottagers who owned a house, garden, and orchard on a small plot of land, rather than landowning farmers in Rosenthal—although they did own a mill. She considered *anwohner* second-class citizens. However, the children of landowners and *anwohner* attended grade school together and so became friends. She was critical of her sons (there were six) if they brought some poor *anwohner's* son home with them. Why not aim a little higher? Class consciousness was ever present in the Funk home, possibly because of her Flemish background and Frisian husband.

Peter was often also puzzled about another strange phenomenon in the side-by-side towns of Rosenthal and Chortitza. In the large

[6] This letter and other letters or journal excerpts that are quoted in this book are part of the Katie Funk Wiebe personal papers collection, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg.

Mennonite church in Chortitza, which all Mennonites from both communities attended, why did the people from Chortitza sit at the end nearest Rosenthal and the people from Rosenthal sit at the end toward Chortitza? Whether this had anything to do with the Flemish/Frisian conflict I don't know. But it was another puzzle he and my father, the brother closest to him, had to figure out as they dangled their feet while sitting on those hard wooden benches, listening to sermon after sermon in High German, many of them read from books of sermons brought along from Prussia, occasionally staring at the ceiling, fashioning mice out of handkerchiefs, or waiting for the congregation to join the *vorsaenger,* who led them line by line through one of the many-stanza hymns their ancestors had first sung decades ago in Prussia. Any misbehavior was quickly punished with a trip outside and a firm hand to the backside. Children knew you sat quietly in church even if ants were crawling up your leg.

Another tension recorded in the history books[7] existed between the Chortitza Mennonites, who migrated to Ukraine first and spoke mostly Low German (the Old Colonists, or First Colonists), and those who came later, settled in the Molotschna, and spoke more High German due to their better education. The two groups spoke slightly different dialects of Low German. This tension was not as clear in my father's mind as the Flemish/Frisian conflicts.

Tradition was strong in the Mennonite church. Only Mennonites were admitted as members, as stipulated by their terms of settlement in Russia, although a few Lutherans and Hutterites slipped in by default. Dad's feelings about denominational purification never left him, but added to his inner turmoil when another kind of unexpected church conflict arose. As a young man of 25 he faced a head-on collision between the hyper-spiritual Mennonite Brethren church leaders and himself. He had already left the Mennonite (*Kirchliche*) church and been baptized by immersion in the Dnieper, joining the Mennonite Brethren congregation. No problem there. The issue was his marriage to my mother, Anna Janzen, who was a baptized member of the *Allianz* church, another renewal-minded Mennonite group that stressed experiential

[7] See Cornelius Bergmann and Cornelius Krahn, "Chortitza Mennonite Settlement (Zaporizhia Oblast, Ukraine)," in *GAMEO* (1955); Cornelius J. Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History: A Popular History of the Anabaptists and the Mennonites*, 3rd revised ed. (Herald Press, 1993); Cornelius Krahn, "Molotschna Mennonite Settlement (Zaporizhia Oblast, Ukraine)," in *GAMEO* (1957); and C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Pandora Press, 1995).

piety over denominational boundaries and divisions. The Mennonite Brethren expelled him. The scar of that wound never faded.

My father's grandfather, Jacob Franz Funk, was 25 years old when the Mennonite Brethren Church was first organized, old enough to sense the turmoil their secession from the mother church created in the church. Dad's father, Johann Jacob Funk, was born in 1866, six years after the Brethren seceded from the mother Mennonite church in Russia because of their discomfort with what they saw as the low level of spirituality in the mother church. How much table talk in the Funk home had focused on this strange bunch of secessionists who thought they were better than the others?

My father remembered these church rebels as being described to him as "a loud bunch." He added, "Better you don't know all about it." He was referring to the *froehliche*, or "happy ones," who misinterpreted Evangelist Eduard Wuest's doctrine of "joyous justification" as freedom to express themselves with wholehearted abandonment in church services, leading to disorderliness. Their joy expressed itself also by "brothers" giving "sisters" a kiss in obedience to the New Testament commandment, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." On a few occasions the greeting didn't stay with a kiss and created a dark stain on their early history.[8]

My father and his brother Peter joined the Brethren because they sided with them theologically. Both had had a crisis spiritual conversion while in military service during World War I. My mother had been baptized in the *Kirchliche* church at age 18 as a matter of tradition. She, like Dad, also had a definitive spiritual experience—a conversion—which drew Dad to the more evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church and mother to the Evangelical Mennonite *Allianz* Church, a church bridging the gap between the MBs and the traditional mother church (*Kirchliche*) in terms of baptismal mode. The *Allianz* were just as vigorously evangelical and pietistic as the MBs, but they did not care as much about denominational distinctives.

However, these Mennonite Brethren whom Dad identified with because of their clear call to conversion had the gall to excommunicate him for marrying Mother, who had been baptized by immersion in the

[8] See Peter M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789–1910)*, translated by J.B. Toews, Abraham Friesen, Peter J. Klassen, and Harry Loewen (Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978), 262–280, 325–341; and John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers* (Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975), 51–68.

Allianz church—just like the Brethren baptized. Why all the fences? Was there more to it? Mixing MBs with *Kirchliche* Mennonites had become a big no-no. That was considered sliding into the ditch spiritually. Now that taboo extended to members of this offshoot, the *Allianz* church. Mennonite Brethren and any other denomination don't mix was the strong message. Impossible. The church had to be kept pure.

"The rule was that an MB could only marry an MB or out he goes," Dad wrote me in later life. "They told me to repent and say I was sorry I broke the rule. I told them I can't say I'm sorry I married my wife. That would be a lie." But more about this later. Again, I am getting ahead of my story. There is so much interesting stuff to wade through first.

Tension between the Mennonite Brethren and the *Kirchliche* (later a significant component of the General Conference Mennonites in North America, now called the Mennonite Church) from which the MBs seceded continued for decades in Canada and the United States. Each group was suspicious of the other's theology and spirituality. Dad wrote me from British Columbia: *I met a man. We started talking about Russia. We had something in common. Then he asked me what church I went to. I told him MB. He didn't say anything. Just walked away, let me stand. How foolish I felt. What had I done? What is wrong with being an MB?* My father could never understand this tension within what he saw as a Mennonite brotherhood.

He commented on this in another letter when he thought I might be stomping on toes in my writing. *Watch out for the orthodox MBs. They can be very brutal, hard, ready to stone anyone who rocks the boat of tradition. We must not talk or ask questions. We must only ask questions that please so as not to disturb tradition.*

When I was young, the old people always said, "Children should be seen, not heard." We only knew enough to say, "Yes, Mom; yes, Dad; yes, Teacher; yes, Preacher; yes, Officer (army)." We just took orders without question. The old people, teachers, preachers, army officers did the thinking for us. The teacher or preacher or officer had the right and power to punish as he wanted. We had no choice. I lived that life…Katie, if you had grown up in a narrow-minded Mennonite community, you would think so too…I'm blowing off some steam.

He grieved also when he talked about the way some Mennonite landowners treated the Russian boys and men employed as farm hands. The general Russian population was not as well-educated as the more progressive Mennonites. The Russian serfs had survived generations of depressed living conditions. The Mennonites in the Mennonite villages and other German-speaking colonists in the Lutheran and Catholic villages had generations of upward mobility behind them.

Although the Russians weren't slaves, they rarely sat at the same table as their employers or ate the same food. There was a clear sense of knowing your station in life: Mennonites and Russians were two different social classes.[9] On some estates, the Russian serfs slept in the barn and were fed inferior food by the landowner, often in the kitchen. If the owner was enjoying roast beef and potatoes, the lowly worker was fed jacket potatoes with a little fat to pour over them. Men and women served as cowherds. Young boys heated ovens and girls looked after children or helped in the dairy and with the pouring of tallow candles. On Sundays, they stayed home to look after the children while their employers went to church.

Dad's soul was rubbed raw when he saw the Russian farm laborers treated harshly, their ears boxed severely and their backs whipped for disobedience. Many had descended from serfs who had been attached to the land and sold with it like chattel. They were admonished to know their place. Was he thinking of the many times in school he had been publically humiliated and punished for being left-handed and made to feel inferior? The Russian government had no national educational system, so many of these lowly laborers were illiterate, unlike the Mennonites who believed in education and had schools for both girls and boys. The peasant population let their resentment be known that they saw the Mennonites and the other German-speaking colonists succeeding and taking over when they, who had been in Russia for centuries, still struggled to survive.

The tensions of the Mennonite world in Russia as my father had experienced them came along into the new world in Canada in the inner baggage of the soul and spirit of the immigrants. The Flemish/Frisian conflict of my father's youth lacked a medium in which to grow in the new country where people settled in mixed groups and there were no clear Flemish or Frisian congregations, so it gradually disappeared. Some

[9] See Leonard G. Friesen, "Mennonites and their Peasant Neighbors in Ukraine Before 1900," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 10 (1992): 56–69; Jacob A. Loewen and Wesley J. Prieb, "The Abuse of Power Among Mennonites in South Russia 1789–1919," *JMS* 14 (1996): 17–44; Dietrich Neufeld, *A Russian Dance of Death: Revolution and Civil War in the Ukraine* (Hyperion Press, 1977); Sean Patterson, "The Eichenfeld Massacre: Recontextualizing Mennonite and Makhnovist Narratives," *JMS* 32 (2014): 151–174; David G. Rempel with Cornelia Rempel Carlson, *A Mennonite Family in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union*, 1789–1923 (University of Toronto Press, 2002); Gerhard P. Schroeder, *Miracles of Grace and Judgment: A Brief Account of the Personal Contacts and Experiences with Some of the Leaders and Followers of the Notorious Makhnovshchina during the Civil War in the Ukraine, 1914–1923* (G.P. Schroeder, 1974); and John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland: The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from the Soviet Union 1921–1927* (Regent College Publishing, 1967).

of the other tensions, like the differences between the Mennonite Brethren and the other Mennonites and between the rich and poor traveled from country to country, becoming issues later in the history of the Mennonites in America—and of my family.

Flinzen

In Prussia and Russia, pancakes were often served as a meal in themselves. In our Canadian home, they were standard Saturday noon fare because family members took turns working the store by eating in shifts, and Mother could keep up with the frying over the coal and wood stove. The number of eggs she used depended on how plentiful they were at the time.

* * * * *

Beat until smooth 2 cups milk, 1¼ cups flour, 1 teaspoon salt, and 3 eggs. Melt about ½ cup butter in small container and keep near the pan. The frying pan must be hot to begin. Pour about ½ cup batter into a 9–10 inch pan, tilting pan so that it spreads evenly. Add 1 tsp butter around edges of pancake. When browned, turn the cake using a spatula or pancake turner. Stack finished cakes. Grandmother Susanna sometimes layered them with cherries or berries, but in our home they were eaten too fast. Cut the stack into wedges and serve with sugar, syrup, or thickened fruit sauce.

* * * * *

Later on, in my home, we added cottage cheese, sausage, and bacon. Sometimes I made the children drink a glass of tomato juice to add a few vitamins to the meal. For years, my American son and his wife, a non-ethnic Mennonite, invited about twenty to thirty guests each New Year's Day for a Russian pancake brunch, and though his pancakes resembled in essence the simple food my grandmothers and great-grandmothers made in Prussia and Russia, the trimmings were changing. But who doesn't love Russian pancakes?

3

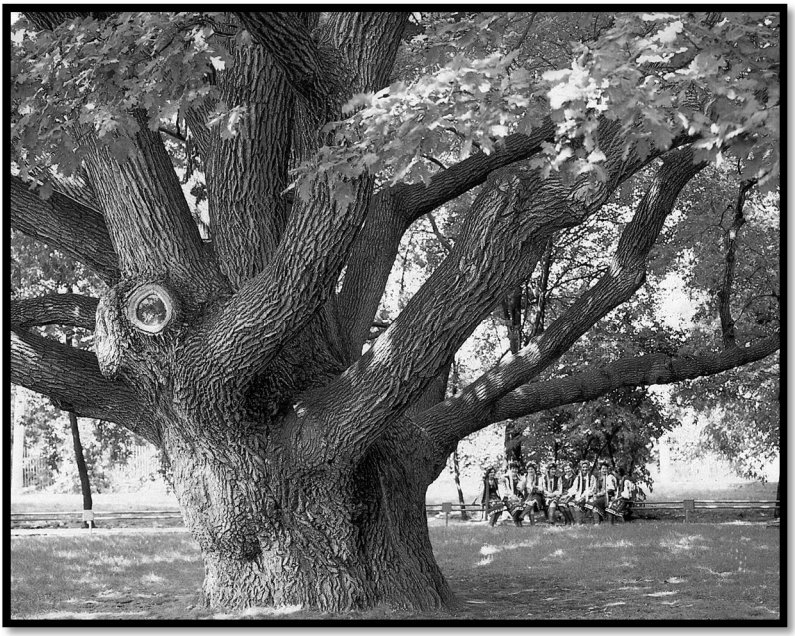
The first migration, a witch, and a wedding

In 1786, Catharine the Great of Russia, in search of proven agriculturalists, extended an invitation to the Mennonites feeling the pinch of religious and political pressures in Prussia to purchase land in Ukraine for their growing families. She promised special privileges: land to farm as in Prussia, religious and educational freedom, as well as exemption from military service. The offer sounded inviting. Two years later, the first group of Prussian Mennonites set out on the long, difficult journey for southern Russia to begin life anew. They had no religious leaders among them. Teachers (who also served as preachers) couldn't get passports to leave Prussia, which meant the better educated people stayed behind at a time when they were sorely needed to establish the educational and religious life in the new colonies. Four inexperienced men were chosen en route to be the spiritual leaders and to read sermons brought with them when the group gathered for worship. Little religious literature was available in Low German, so this was not a biblically literate group.

The first Funks came to Russia in 1789 with this first group of courageous Mennonites from the Danzig area in Prussia. The settlers were given 37,253 *desjatin* of land near Chortitza on the west side of the wide Dnieper River (one *desjatin* equals about 2.7 acres). The first winter had been spent en route to their new home because Russia's border conflicts made travel hazardous. The immigrants traveled by foot, cart, wagon, and river barge. Many died along the way. They reached their destination in Ukraine at the convergence of the Chortitza River and the Dnieper River on July 20, 1789, at a time when purchase of Russian land was still much restricted.

They spent the first months in their new land in tents and mud houses until better houses could be built. Horses were stolen or lost because of lack of fences. The promised government assistance of 500

rubles per family was delayed, sometimes for years. In the first year after their arrival, eight villages were settled, followed by several more in the early 1800s. These early Mennonites from Danzig had been involved in farming, dairying, business, and crafts, but the majority were poor, so more came from the category of skilled laborers, like carpenters, blacksmiths, millers, tanners, brewers, and fishermen. The wealthier among them were farmers who brought with them large numbers of livestock. More settlers came two years later, starting another major settlement near the Molotschna River. They knew High German better than the first Old Colony settlers, who spoke mostly Low German. They were also better educated. So began the two settlements and the rivalries previously mentioned.



On Chortitza island near Rosenthal where the Funks lived stood the legendary 700-year-old oak tree under whose flourishing branches the Mennonite settlers gathered for more than a hundred years to rejoice, remember, and restore spirits. The tree has since died.

By 1840, 1,150 families, or about 6,000 Mennonites, had settled in Russia. Families were large. The original group grew to 34,500 by 1859. Each original family was given 65 *desjatin* of land, not to be divided. That meant only one son could farm the original land grant. At first this wasn't a problem because other land was available, but four decades after

arriving in Russia, the Mennonites found that nearly all available land was taken except for one large tract of about several thousand *desjatin*, offered only to the wealthy at a very low price. They then leased it to the landless for a much higher price, creating much discontent. The poor had few possibilities to buy or lease land, and because only landowners could vote in the village, they were rendered powerless. The landless families were given a place to build a house and start a garden plot at the village outskirts, and for that reason were known as *anwohner,* "landless." The "landed" farmers were known as *wirte.*

By 1865, two-thirds (2,356) of the Mennonites in Molotschna were landless and without representation in the local government, compared to 1,384 landed farmers. Even the church leaders, always unsalaried, were chosen from among the leading citizenry. This meant the landless had no one speaking for them and their rights. A discontented proletariat class was emerging among the Mennonite settlers.

Many *anwohner* tried to buy land, either large or small lots, from Russian landowners, whose land was cheaper. Some even moved into the surrounding Russian villages, where they worked as laborers, but the majority had to stay in the Mennonite settlements.

In the 1860s, the landless Mennonites in the Molotschna banded together to get help for their dire situation. They maintained that the undistributed, or common land, had been given to all Mennonites and that they had a right to it. They needed it. They demanded it. Land holdings should be made smaller, and the landless given a vote in village government.

Mennonite colony leaders did not receive this approach well. To maintain their economic advantage they could not agree to these demands, nor did they want to. The disagreement grew stronger. The landless went to the Russian government in St. Petersburg, who ruled in their favor. But the division of undistributed land into 88- and 40-acre tracts for the landless was only a temporary solution. Some of the very poor had no money to buy land at any price and needed assistance to get started. Mennonite families, traditionally large, needed more than a small piece of common land to meet their needs. To appease the lower classes, the colonies bought large pieces of land at a distance from the original settlements for the landless. This arrangement allowed them to live in closed Mennonite settlements with their own churches and schools, like the original ones. This is how the daughter colonies in Ukraine got started. My mother's family lived in one of these daughter settlements, Sagradowka, but my father's family were original settlers in the Old Colony of Chortitza.

One observer commented that Mennonite religion and politics in an agricultural society were as intertwined as vines in a watermelon patch. Church and state walked hand in hand in the Mennonite villages. The villages were self-governing, with the *schulz* (mayor) chosen from the wealthy to look after village civic affairs. The elder, the foremost religious leader, was also elected for life from the landed wealthy deacons by a majority vote. He was assisted in providing moral and spiritual guidance by ministers and deacons, also from this social class. Together they constituted the *lehrdienst* (teachers), charged with preserving the traditions of the fathers. These highly respected men could not be removed except for gross sin. Congregations tolerated little novelty or new ideas, and generally affirmed existing knowledge. If you preached traditional teachings, you were considered a good preacher.

Until the Mennonites began leaving Russia for North America in the 1870s, their relationship to the Russians was clearly defined. They established closed communities and spoke German, considering themselves superior to the Slavic culture. By 1897, 78 percent of Russian people were illiterate, whereas every child in the German villages could read and write. This was the political and religious environment of which my Funk predecessors were an integral part.

The first Funks on Russian soil

The Funk story begins! Some of the following may get a little boring, so skip it and start with the witch story later in the chapter, if you want. There is a one-page summary of the Funk family tree on page 309 that may help to keep the names straight, if you choose to read on.

On August 1, 1789, 20-year-old **Franz Peter Funck** (1769–1834) and his young wife, **Maria** (1775–1836), arrived from Prussia to settle at Kronsweide (Vladimirovka), near Zaporizhia, South Russia. This village was part of the larger Chortitza settlement that would become known as the Old Colony, or First Colony. He was registered in the Kronsweide colonization record in 1814 as a farmer whose family at that time consisted of two sons and two daughters. At the time, he owned seven horses, 13 cows, 16 sheep, four pigs, one plow, two harrows, one wagon, and three spinning wheels—a sizeable estate, placing him in an upper social class. In 1833 Franz and Maria abandoned the first location because of a shortage of water and rebuilt about three miles away.

Franz's father, **Peter Funck**, also moved from the Danzig (Gdansk) area to the Kronsweide area near Zaporizhia at the same time. The name of his wife is not known. He was also registered as a farmer.

Official registries list only male heads of families. In that culture, carried over from Prussia, a son or daughter belonged to the father's family until baptism and marriage. Land was apportioned to family units, not to individuals. As soon as a son or daughter was baptized and married, his or her name was taken off the parental family register and, together with spouse, considered a new unit meriting their own page. People migrated as family units and were processed as family units, often with widowed members, foster children, and even servants as part of the group. In church life, the same system prevailed. Widows who had no living relatives were registered as individuals. My handwritten copy of page 720 of the official church registry of the Chortitza/Rosenthal Mennonite Church gives the details for my grandmother, widow Susanna Peters Funk and her family: birthdates, baptisms, and deaths. It is stamped with the church seal and I Cor. 3:11 and II Tim. 2:19.

Chortitza became the religious, cultural, and institutional center of the Old Colony and its daughter settlements. It was surrounded by a forest, plowed fields, and a well-tended graveyard. Mennonite villages in the new settlement were laid out with neatly divided yards along the main road. The sidewalk was marked off from the thoroughfare by a row of acacia trees. A large machine shed (*schien*) had an important place in the yard as well as a summer kitchen, threshing floor, straw stacks, manure piles, and hog barns.

With the exception of the rich living on large estates, each house was built using the same floor plan with an attached barn. They were usually made of hard sandstone, white limestone, or red brick made from clay. The poor used adobe bricks. Floors were of wood and walls covered with patterned wallpaper or painted. Every family had a clock and a large wooden chest to store bedding. Outside the house stood a bench with wash pan and soap—the predecessor of today's mudrooms. You were expected to wash before you came into the house from the field. Mennonites believed in cleanliness. Years later, during the summer in Blaine Lake, before we went to bed, we children, having played all day in mud and grass in bare feet, washed our feet outside under a small portable water tank with an attached spigot hung onto the outside wall. Strongly ingrained customs are hard to break.

Individual farm estates, or *khutor,* had sometimes been bought from rich Russian landowners or generals, and, at times, were very large—several hundred *desjatin*. The largest at one time was about 54,000 acres. Often these estates looked like small settlements, with a main house and many outbuildings. Such an establishment, with modern farm equipment not yet available, required up to several hundred sheep herders, cattle

men, and field workers, kitchen help, maids, child care workers, and more. Orphaned, landless Mennonite boys served as *staulknajchten* (barn laborers) and girls as maids. My mother, coming from a poor family, began her working life at age 15 as a *kindermaedchen,* a nanny for a rich farmer.

In front of the house was a well-tended flower garden and behind it a large kitchen garden and orchard with every manner of fruit, including grapes, with the field for grain behind that. Sometimes gardens were planted in communal plots outside the village. Corn was grown only for pig and cattle feed. It became people food only in spring when very tender. My father never could bring himself to eat this animal fodder. The cattle were herded communally, with a herder collecting the cows early each morning as he strolled through the village. In the evening, he brought them back for their owners to milk and feed. Well, actually, the owners' wives did the milking. And the daughters, if there were any. Milking was women's work—always. The farmer's pride was his horses, always fed the best fodder and given the best care because they did the main hard labor. The lighter, faster horses pulled the buggies and lighter conveyances.

Clothing was simple, practical, and inexpensive. Men wore work shirts open at the neck during the week and buttoned on Sunday. Few wore neckties. A cap with visor completed the outfit in summer. Winter often brought out fur caps and felt boots. Cloth for clothing and linens was unbleached muslin, ticking, calico, flannel, wool, and paisley. The wealthier adorned their clothing with pleats, silk braided lace, and fancy buttons. A fur robe made of wolf pelts was much prized. Women wore heavy woolen shawls instead of coats in winter. In summer, a woman picked a spray of *schmackkruet*, a type of mint, and placed it in her hymnal to refresh herself during the service, often long and wearying. Probably boring, too.

Houses had low fences or walls around the yard to separate them. Rich people's walls were sometimes brick or lumber, fancy, painted white usually. Neatness and symmetry were features of each yard. A few barns with high roofs in each village attracted nesting storks each summer, a sign of good fortune. Near the gate, close to the house wall, stood a bench made of wood or stone where men gathered after the day's work and on Sundays to chat with neighbors, an important component of Mennonite life in south Russia.

Harvest was a season of high spirits as the winter wheat was sheaved, then hauled to the threshing floor where grain was separated from chaff by means of a large stone wheel pulled over the sheaves.

Some grain was stored, and the rest ground by a local miller or taken by wagon to the Odessa port on the Black Sea. Watermelons, pumpkins (used for cow fodder), and fruits and vegetables of all kinds were brought into root cellars and attics. Hog-butchering, the main social event each fall, had to be planned for it required the help of neighbors and friends to work and celebrate the abundant supply of well-liked food for the winter. Ahead, the winter promised good times skating, sleighing, and racing with horses after the fall plowing and sowing had been finished.

These first settlers in Chortitza and Molotschna endured many hardships, for they were farming virgin territory, albeit fertile soil. Many were buried in an early grave. More than a few lost courage. When in 1800 the Russian government offered them the privilege to rule their own colonies, the freedom of religion and from military service, and the right to manage their own schools, they took new courage—as did those still in Prussia who followed in the early 1800s. Negotiations with the Russian government had resulted in this second group receiving another 120,000 *desjatin* of land for settlement purposes on the left side of the Molotschna River under the Taurischen government.

This second wave of Mennonites, the 342 families of the Molotschna, arrived in 1804 and developed into master farmers. In a few years, another 99 families arrived, in 1820 another 215, and in 1835 another 80, to make a total of 736 families in the Molotschna. Four hundred families had settled in the Old, or First Colony. By 1840, a total of 1,150 families (about 6,000 people) had migrated from Prussia to Russia, among them my distant Funk ancestors, bringing with them hopes for a more secure future with freedom to follow their religious ideals and dreams of establishing strong families and a strong church—but also memories of tensions, conflicts, and divisions. But it was a new beginning.

Great-grandfather Jacob Franz Funk

The grandson of Franz Peter Funck, **Jacob Franz Funk**, was a wealthy landowner, according to the standards of those days. He was born in 1835 in Kronsweide, Russia, nearly four decades after his family migrated to southern Russia. At some point he moved to Neu-Osterwick, where eight of his surviving 13 children grew up. Five children died in infancy. Jacob Franz Funk was my great-grandfather. Death in infancy was common in those years because of inadequate prenatal and childbirth care, as well as childhood dysentery and other diseases. The diseases most feared were diphtheria and black pox (smallpox). It was not unusual

to see a survivor of the pox with a face deeply scarred for life. My maternal grandmother, Katharina Boldt Janzen, was a survivor with a deeply pitted face and raspy voice.

But even in these very early years, Mennonites, including the Funks, had a venturesome spirit, always seeking better living conditions, always ready to begin again. A relative on Grandmother Susanna Funk's side, John John Peters (born 1824), moved from Nepluyevka to Canada in 1878, with eight of their nine children. Their oldest son, Nickolai J. (Klaas) Peters, the father of my grandmother Susanna Peters Funk, remained in Russia where he became a wealthy farmer. He died during the typhus epidemic of 1920 together with his wife Elizabeth, son-in-law Johann Johann Funk, and son Peter Nickolai Peters. I'll say more about these traumatic deaths later.

Grandmother Susanna Funk wrote decades later that in 1937 she had received a letter from a John Peters (born 1849) at the age of 88, who then lived in Laird, Saskatchewan. He stated that his grandparents Johann Peters and Maria Froese moved from Germany to south Russia in 1793, settling in Neuenburg. Relatives all over the globe, finishing in one place and beginning in another.

A great story: Susanna Kasdorf Rempel, the "witch"

My grandfather, Johann Jacob Funk, was the seventh child to be born to Jacob Franz Funk and Susanna Jacob Dahl. His sister Susanna, married to Johann Gerhard Rempel, was widely known as "the witch," or *Hakjsrampelsche*. A small footnote in the first Funk genealogy I read as a teenager stated in German: "She was reported to be a witch." In my youthful mind, I thought of her as someone living in the Dark Ages, centuries ago.

In later life I learned to know more about her. In 1985 in Hillsboro, Kansas, my father's cousin Kaethe Kasdorf Warkentin told me she had known the "witch" well—in fact, she had a long, good relationship with Aunt Susanna or *Saunchemum*, as she called her, a form of endearment frequently used in Low German circles. I had hit a treasure trove of information.

Mrs. Rempel was called *Hakjsrampelsche* (Witch Rempel) in the village because of her strange ways. Mennonites frequently used nicknames to identify people because several people often carried nearly the same name. They continued this practice in Canada. Mrs. Rempel was noticeably different from the other villagers, but Kaethe was kind in

her judgment of the woman whose life had been dealt many severe blows.

Herr and *Frau* Rempel lived in the residence near the school and Chortitza church. *Frau* Rempel kept the school and church clean and tidy and had lots of other work. *Herr* Rempel was the mailman. When someone dislocated a foot or an arm, they went to *Taunte* Rempel to get the bone straightened, and when they had abscesses, she provided medicine. Chiropractors were in high demand in the Mennonite colonies at a time when doctors were few. A *trajchtmoaka* (bone setter) was expected to cure almost anything. When someone in the village died, *Taunte* Rempel came, washed the body, and prepared the coffin. She would explain that she had known beforehand that someone would die because her saw and hammer, indeed all her materials used to prepare the body for burial, had been set in motion, or trembled.

Susanna Jacob Rempel married late in life (age 25) and then not to a prize catch. Her husband was socially inept—in fact, somewhat backward. She bore him seven children, all of whom died either by accident, at birth, or in infancy. Six children died in toddler stage. Only one boy, Peter, stayed alive past childhood. Susanna and Johann then adopted a girl, whom they named Lena. Susanna watched over both surviving children with eagle eyes. They were not allowed to take part in any activities or go bathing in the Dnieper River. Yet one summer evening a farmer's haystack caught fire and the whole village ran to help—or to satisfy their curiosity. Peter was already a young man. Alone at the Dnieper, he went swimming though he was unfamiliar with its strong undertow, which now and then dragged even strong swimmers to the bottom. Peter got caught in the current and drowned. The Rempels sorrowed to lose their only son at such a young age. Everyone in the village was much disturbed.

Their adopted daughter Lena, now grown, and a boyfriend were "visiting" on the school yard before going into the school building where firearms for army recruits were stored. During World War I, with schools closed, young recruits drilled on the school yards. The young man picked up a gun and thoughtlessly pulled the trigger. The bullet struck Lena, killing her. This happened only a few months after Peter's death. Now the Rempels were truly alone.

So *Saunchemum* grew aloof and distant from the rest of the Rosenthal Mennonite community. She was rude, especially to children. Kaethe reported that her two younger sisters could not be persuaded to go to her place for any amount of money. As an eight-year-old, Kaethe had once been sent to invite the Rempels to her parents' home for *faspa* (a

light Sunday evening meal). When Kaethe arrived, some people visiting Mrs. Rempel told her someone was at the door. "Oh, that's just a snot-nosed bastard," Mrs. Rempel had replied. Mrs. Rempel was also outspoken about her less than idyllic life with her husband. Once in Kaethe's presence she had advised, "Never marry a man you don't love."

Saunchemum wore colorful skirts and blouses, as opposed to the traditional Mennonite dark skirt and blouse. She wrapped a turban around her head and dangled an armful of bracelets with charms, adding to her strange image. In her mouth usually dangled a long cigarette; Mennonite women did not smoke. She told fortunes using Tarot cards and read palms. Russians, Jews, and others, including a few Mennonites, came from all around to have their fortune told by her, which of course did not give her a good name with Mennonites. She wanted to tell Kaethe's fortune once, but Kaethe refused because she didn't believe in it. "But I can tell fortunes," Mrs. Rempel had insisted. Sometimes events she had forecast came true.

She made good money with her fortune-telling but stayed far away from the church, and church people wanted nothing to do with her. In later life, Mrs. Rempel and Kaethe often talked. Other Mennonites were turned away from her door and not allowed to enter. Kaethe saw her as a person with tremendous talents and gifts not allowed to develop in that conservative culture, so she turned to other means to express her creativity. She was born a century ahead of her time. You'll meet her again in the next chapters.

Some reports say husband and wife both died of typhus. Kaethe says only Mrs. Rempel died suddenly of typhus; he was taken elsewhere to be cared for, quite alone in the world for his children and wife had all died. When the Great Trek to Poland of the German-speaking settlers in Ukraine began in 1943, he was taken along as an invalid. In Poland he died in the hospital.

Here is my Mennonite "witch's" family genealogy. **Susanna Jacob Funk**, born December 19, 1862, married **Johann Gerhard Rempel**, born June 15, 1860, on December 8, 1887. Children:

Susan (November 5, 1888—January 31, 1889)
Maria (November 8, 1890—September 11, 1906)
Jacob (January 29, 1893—July 13, 1894)
Johann (April 6, 1896—August 29, 1896, lived five months)
Susana (November 17, 1899—February 19, 1901)
Peter (March 5, 1902—August 17, 1918, drowned in the Dnieper)

The adopted daughter Lena is not mentioned in this list. What a sad legacy to leave even when there are no heirs to receive it.

Faspa

One of the strongest Mennonite traditions was faspa, a highlight of the week, when friends and relatives came together to enjoy sweet roll pastries made with light wheat flour instead of the heavier rye bread. The variety of baked products was almost endless, from tweeback, fruit plauts, crumb cake, sugar-sprinkled rolls, raisin buns, yeast peppernuts, schnetje. When these foods were eaten with several cups of coffee with cream and a hard sugar cube, one could while away many an hour in good conversation and laughter. The meal needed nothing more, for the emphasis was on simplicity. The Mennonite housewife was not expected to prepare food for guests on Sunday, the day of rest and visiting. Cooking and baking was all done on Saturday, a tradition that my mother carried on in Canada all her life.

4

"Forever summer, forever Sunday"

My grandfather **Johann Jacob Funk** was married to **Susanna Nick (Nickolai) Peters** of Rosengart, a few miles from Kronsthal, on December 18, 1867, in Kronsthal. He was 22, she was 17. In that culture, children were only given one name at birth. Their second name, boy or girl, was always their father's name, or patronymic. Because Susanna's father's name was Nickolai, her second name was also Nickolai, or Nichovlenja, the Russian form. This way people always knew what branch of the family a child belonged to. It wasn't unusual for a child to have the same first and second names, like my uncle Johann Johann Funk. His father's name was Johann. No one thought that strange.

I don't know how Johann and Susanna met. Probably at some church function or in school. They didn't live far apart. She was fairly tall, self-assured. He was also tall and good-looking, and came from a well-to-do family. Did they use a matchmaker (*heiratsvermittler*), as was common in those very early days if a young man could not find a young woman who pleased him? I doubt it. She was too outgoing.

The process of picking out a wife and then courting her was the brunt of many practical jokes both in Prussia and the early years in Russia. Girls grew up in sheltered, strict home atmospheres, so would-be suitors were often bashful about declaring their amorous intentions. Sometimes the young woman leaked the news out ahead of time that she didn't want a certain young man. News about an engagement or a refusal soon became public knowledge among the young people of the village. Before the rejected suitor left the young woman's home, their friends, knowing her intended decision, tied a basket measuring two feet by four feet to the axle of the prospective suitor's buggy in such a way he couldn't see it when climbing in for his return journey. When he whipped the horse forward to make a quick getaway, the basket clattered behind him, like tin cans tied to newlyweds' getaway car a few decades ago, but for a

different reason. Everyone in the village knew his girlfriend had turned him down. The word spread quickly he had received "an empty basket."

The engagement of Johann and Susanna took place in her parents' home in Rosengart. He never received an "empty basket." As the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, a big wedding was planned. Homes, rather than churches, were the focus of family events like weddings and funerals. An engagement letter written by the local teacher, who usually had good handwriting, had been sent to relatives and friends and signed by the bride's parents. The written note, or *ssadel*, listed all guests. When one guest finished reading it, he checked off his family's name and quickly passed it on to the next person on the list. Shame on the lazy or forgetful person who neglected his civic duty to pass on the *ssadel*.

The afternoon of the engagement celebration, Johann's parents came to the bride's home for the noon meal. The bridegroom traveled alone, driving his well-polished buggy with its groomed horses down the tree-lined streets of the village. When all the guests had arrived, the assembled family and friends sang one or two hymns. The minister preached a short sermon and announced the couple as officially engaged. After another hymn, the guests were served with coffee and *tweeback*. This official *verlobung* gave them freedom to be seen together.

The engagement usually moved quickly towards the wedding, taking at most two to three weeks, during which time the bridal couple visited all relatives and received gifts. Weddings usually took place in early spring or late fall after harvesting and threshing had finished, and people had time to celebrate. The events were occasions for much merriment and entertainment in a society that enjoyed few of today's leisure time activities. Wedding guests had been invited the same way as they had been for the engagement party—with a *ssadel* passed from guest to guest. With this arrangement, guests always knew who hadn't been invited.

The day before the wedding, Susanna's friends brought milk, cream, and butter to her parents' home and mixed and kneaded the dough, divided it, and delivered it to the homes of housewives who had agreed to bake the *tweeback* for the next day's festivities. No cooling racks? Sometimes bushels of the much-loved bread were baked and laid on tea towels covering clean straw in the machine shed to cool. A celebration wasn't a celebration without *tweeback*. Mennonite women enjoyed hosting guests, and it would never do to not have enough. Leftover *tweeback* could always be roasted to become another favorite delicacy dunked into either coffee or *prips*, a roasted grain-based drink that even little children drank.

The marriage festivities for this couple began with a *pultaowent*, a long-standing loud and boisterous custom held the evening before the

wedding, usually a Saturday. This practice had been brought by the Mennonites from Prussia, and before that, from western Europe. The couple sat on chairs decorated with flowers and greenery in a large room of either the house, shed, or barn, cleaned out for the occasion and decorated with garlands of flowers. Mennonites loved to decorate with the products of their gardens and orchards. A large flower garden was every Mennonite woman's pride and joy, and it grew larger and more abundant if the mother of the bride knew a wedding was in the offing.

The wedding was held the next day in the same place, but with one small difference: on this *pultaowent* they sat facing the audience instead of the minister. Guests sat on benches borrowed from neighbors for the occasion. Next followed a program, mostly humorous, of recitations, songs, and music, followed by a few choir songs, after which the couple opened their gifts, usually homemade articles and preserves.

On the wedding day, the groom's parents and family as well as the minister and his wife came for the noon meal, probably *komstborscht* or potato soup and pastries like *perieschkje* and *schnetje*. The bride's mother was expected to prepare mountains of food for the sometimes hundreds of guests without refrigeration or modern appliances. Housewives relied a lot on huge beef roasts, smoked sausage, and hams, as well as soups and *pluememooss* (fruit soup) to see them through. A wedding meant much preparation; and it was a source of great pride to serve guests well. Some villages had *kjasttauntes*, wedding ladies, who oversaw the massive food preparation needed, but not the bride's dress and attendants as they do today. Early weddings had no bridal attendants.

The bride and groom had to be baptized before marriage. This rite usually took place when they were about to be married. The Chortitza settlement had a Church Mother assigned to prepare young women for baptism and to make sure they dressed modestly, hair parted in the center, for catechism instruction and the service itself. For the wedding brides dressed in a new white or black floor-length dress with frills and tucks; a white wreath and veil adorned her head. Sometimes she wore the black dress worn at her baptism.

Susanna's groom wore a three-piece suit that became his "Sunday" suit from then on. He also wore a wreath on his head, or a fancy boutonniere pinned to his suit coat. After the wedding ceremony, the guests were served a *faspa* of coffee and *tweeback*, jam and sugar cubes. The evening was reserved for games and singing, but no dancing. Although some wedding parties had dances, this didn't happen at Johann and Susanna's wedding. His family did not endorse dancing. Susanna's brother, John Peters, had planned a wedding dance, but it was squelched

by Grandpa Peters, Susanna's father. Sinful behavior like that was not tolerated.

The Funk family did not endorse smoking either. Women, of course, didn't even think about it except for nonconformists like my "witch" relative. Most of the native peasants—and also many Mennonites—smoked a kind of tobacco that looked like granules, possibly made from the finely cut stems of tobacco leaves.

The Mennonites had received permission from the Russian government at the time of their immigration to make their own fermented drinks, so drinking was not unusual and sometimes became a problem at pig butchering, when vodka was drunk freely at the end of a long day's work. The Funks did not endorse drinking, although some families made *kwass*, a mild ale made from fermented rye bread. My mother made this drink briefly in Canada. Good stuff.

Susanna's veil and wreath and Johann's wreath were symbolically given to their friends—but not like today, with the bride throwing her bouquet over her shoulder to her friends. Instead, the girls circled Susanna and the young men circled Johann and sang a folk song that talked about the transition from maidenhood to womanhood. During the second verse one of her friends removed her veil and wreath and one of his friends removed his wreath or boutonniere and placed them on a plate. During the last verse a married woman placed a *haube,* or covering, on her head. In the Mennonite community it was considered scriptural for a married woman to wear a visible sign of her husband's authority on her head. The song said: "A bonnet frames your lovely sight; your lot in life, may it be light." For many women, marriage meant much childbearing and hard work.

A married woman wore a *haube*, often a fancy little black headpiece with intricately pleated ribbons and laces, perched on top of her head and tied with a ribbon under her chin, until she died. These head-coverings eventually turned blue-brown with age, limp and lifeless. A picture of Susanna with her parents and sister when she was a little girl shows her mother wearing this traditional covering (see photograph on page 10). But all I ever saw Grandmother Susanna wear was a flat, black bow on top of her bun and a black shawl around her shoulders, which now lies in my storage chest. In later years she didn't even wear that bow. Somewhere she dropped the habit and exchanged it for a plain black hat. And anyway, according to her son Peter, Susanna was the boss in the home, *haube* or no *haube*. Johann was the quiet, more reserved one.

For the first years, it was customary for a young couple to move into the *sommastow* (summer room) of their parents' home until they had

established themselves. Both Johann and Susanna came from well-to-do farmers and would have liked to purchase a farm, but no land was available. As a rule, the farm stayed within the family, with the oldest son taking over farming operations and accepting responsibility of looking after aging parents until they died. Johann was third in line, with other brothers waiting after him to inherit the land.

So Johann and Susanna looked for other work to make a living. Their first child, Susanna, died at birth in 1891, nearly two years after their marriage. She was probably born with the trained *hebamme* (midwife), Frau Slawik, in attendance, hired by the village of Osterwick. Each Mennonite village had a midwife, for babies arrived with unsurprising regularity.

Johann was fortunate to find work in a woodworking factory in Osterwick that manufactured a variety of products, from furniture to coffins to farm machinery such as grain cleaning equipment. Wages were low, so he looked for something that brought in more income. His two brothers, Henry and Franz, had moved to Orenburg in the Ural Mountains near the border with Kazakhstan, a long distance east of Chortitza, and bought farms there. Between 1894 and 1903, 15 Mennonite villages were settled there by the Chortitza land commission, intending to create more farming opportunities for growing landless families. Johann and Susanna decided to move there also with their three sons: John, born 1893; Jacob, my father, born 1896; and Peter, born 1900.

In February of the following year, Johann, Susanna, and their three sons left Osterwick for a new beginning on purchased land in the Ural Mountains. It was a long journey, probably by train. Life in this region was difficult because of long winters and a short summer growing season. The soil was poor, crop failures frequent. Markets for butter, eggs, and other farm products were too far away to make a reasonable living in the thinly populated area. Thievery by neighboring nomadic people was a constant hassle. Johann was still the only wage-earner in the family. His sons were too young to help fill the family coffers.

In the summer of 1904 they called it quits, and they began the return journey to the Old Colony of Ukraine on September 24. The spring before, Susanna had traveled by train to visit her parents living there, taking her new baby daughter, Liese, with her. Johann stayed home with John and Jake, now both in school. Susanna's father, Nickolai (Klaas) Peters, and Johann's parents, Jacob and Susanna Franz Funk, arranged to purchase a windmill for them in Rosenthal in the Old Colony for 3,000 rubles (see photograph on the page opposite the Table of Contents).

They sold the Orenburg farm and moved the 2,000 miles back to take over the windmill and a house. Johann's father had loaned him the money to pay for the deal, and the family looked forward to starting anew among former friends and close relatives. The mill stood at the edge of town on the top of the hill, with free wind not buffered by houses.

Johann Jacob Funk and Susanna Nickolai Peters, my grandparents, returned to Rosenthal to purchase a windmill in 1904.

Johann and Susanna brought to Rosenthal one treasure from their brief stay in Orenburg—their only daughter, Liese, born October 10,

1903, who became the apple of her father's eye. Rosenthal was an old settlement, more stable and better organized as far as civic, religious, and educational life was concerned than the pioneer settlements in the Ural Mountains. They saw the return as a positive move, a chance to start again. Three more boys, Henry, Nick, and Abe, were born to them in 1905, 1908, and 1911, bringing the family to seven.

The next years were the happiest of their lives. These were also the golden years for the Mennonites in southern Russia. The people in the colonies prospered, building schools, businesses, industries, and institutions of all kinds, and arranging social services for the poor, widows, orphans, hearing impaired, and mentally and developmentally handicapped. Bethania Hospital was well known for its treatment of mentally ill people. Large, magnificent church buildings drew the Mennonites to worship each week. Choirs were large and orchestras popular. Factories, businesses, and educational institutions such as high schools and teacher training institutions sprouted up all over. Times were good. The spirit in the colonies was upbeat.

The Mennonites had developed a finely honed social conscience towards their own people but looked down on the Russian peasants. The word *Russe* had an unpleasant connotation within the Mennonite population well after they came to Canada. *Die dummen Russen* (the stupid Russians) was not an uncommon slur. The Russian government did not encourage assimilation, and the Orthodox Church endorsed that position, yet Russian peasant life and the agrarian economy improved substantially in the areas immediately surrounding the Mennonite colonies. The Russian masses watched the progress made by these newcomers and felt jealous.

However, this does not mean the Mennonites were without compassion for the needy. In Russia, the government made no provision for the poor. Pensions and similar provisions were only introduced after the Revolution of 1917–1919. Millions of people had "to reach for the beggar's staff" to begin their rounds of homes of better-situated farmers to avoid starvation. They came by the hundreds, traveling from the surrounding Russian villages to the more prosperous Mennonite ones, pestering housewives for food. Resourceful and efficient, the villagers restricted begging to one day a week, especially after the Russian-Japanese War when disabled veterans flocked home without resources to feed themselves.

Friday was *Prachadach* or *Bettlertag* (Beggar's Day) in Osterwick. Some housewives cooked special food to give beggars, not as good as what they reserved for themselves. A few of my Mennonite cookbooks

include recipes to be made just for beggars. This tidy arrangement meant the good citizens of the village wouldn't be bothered by men, usually veterans with wooden legs and crutches, every time they walked down the street. Even though they had risked their lives for the Fatherland, now, because of the war, they were unable to work. The government didn't hold itself responsible for them. Dressed in rags, with a gunny sack thrown over the shoulder and a heavy stick to drive away dogs, the beggars went from door to door. They tossed whatever the people gave them into their sack to be picked over later.

Some Mennonite villages had an *armenkasse* (treasury for the poor) so none of their own had to beg—a major embarrassment to the former wealthy during the revolutionary period. This abhorrence of begging carried over into Canada. My parents saw Halloween trick-or-treating as begging. No child of theirs would ever go door-to-door begging for treats. They saw it as demeaning, in the same category as the beggars who had come to the door in Rosenthal.

The way ahead in the early 1910s for Johann and Susanna and their six healthy sons and one daughter looked rosy. The boys and Liese were attending school. The mill was providing a good income. Village life was pleasant. Many people later on saw this as the best years of Mennonite life in Ukraine. World War I and the Revolution brought this "forever summer, forever Sunday" life to an abrupt halt.

Tweeback

Tweeback, a two-decker bun, is a Mennonite staple, the queen of Russian-Mennonite cuisine. A step above bulkje, or white bread baked in huge loaves, it was the basis of faspa and needed no slicing. Tweeback were served with coffee at weddings and after funerals, sometimes with lump sugar. What else did you need? Housewives prided themselves on their light, fluffy tweeback. Leftovers were oven-roasted for dunking. Before leaving Russia for America, housewives filled pillowcases with roasted tweeback, their main diet on the long journey from Ukraine across Europe to England and then to America. Babies cut their teeth on these hard rusks, toothless grandpas and grandmas dipped them into coffee and thought life was good. Some thrifty mothers did not allow children to spread butter on tweeback, because they already had butter in them. Twice was too much.

Tweeback dough could be turned into a variety of products, such as crumb cake, plauts, sugar buns, cinnamon rolls, and much more. There were as many variations as there were cooks, but it was important to end up with melt-in-your-mouth buns. My mother dropped the tradition of baking tweeback in favor of a more generic yeast roll within a decade of moving to Canada. We children loved to scoop out the soft insides of a crusty roll and fill it with homemade jam.

* * * * *

Dissolve two packages of yeast in 4 tbsp warm water and 4 teaspoon of sugar. Let stand 10 minutes.

Add ¾ cup melted butter and lard. Some housewives swore by lard.

1½ cups warm milk.

4 tsp salt.

Add enough flour to make a stiff dough, but softer than bread dough. Knead well to give the buns a good texture.

Let rise until double in bulk. Pinch off small balls of dough and place on a greased baking sheet. Then place a smaller ball on top of each bun. Press down to help seal the two-story bun.

Let rise again. Bake at 375 degrees about 15 minutes, or until nicely browned.

5

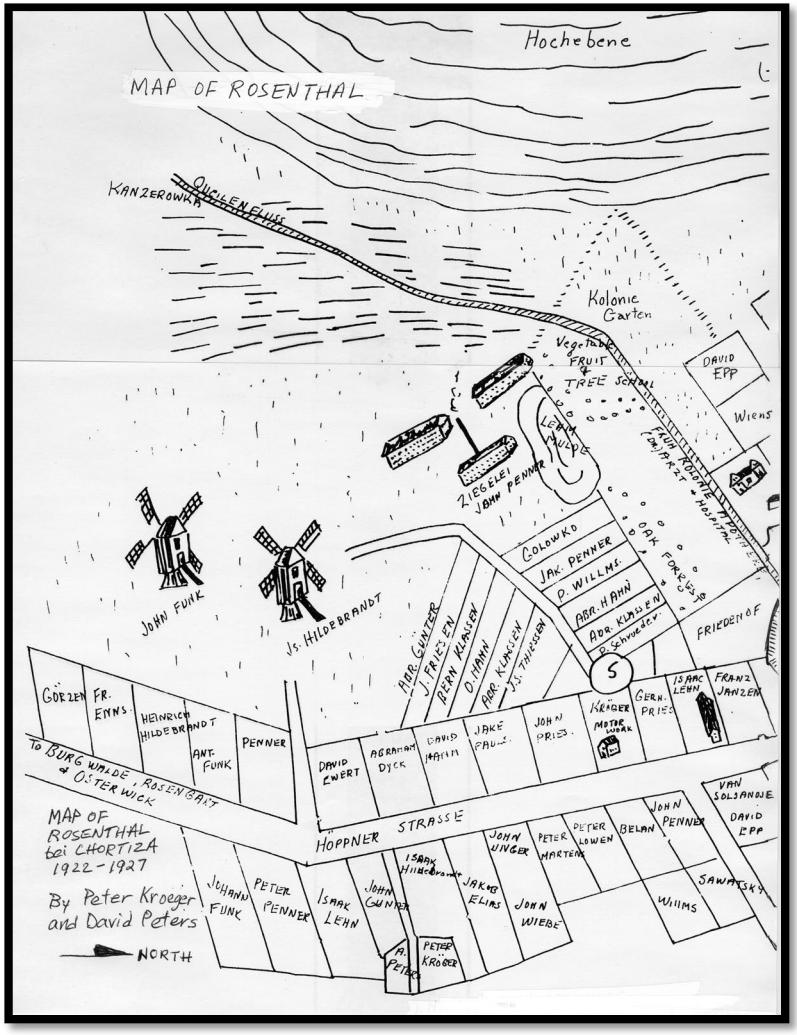
Life in Rosenthal, Valley of Roses

The local windmill in Rosenthal was a village hub made busier if the miller gave good service. Every family needed wheat and rye milled to bake bread and brought their trade to the miller who most enjoyed his customers. Taking time to discuss the latest news was a miller's drawing card. When ground, 10 bags of grain produced 11 bags, the extra bag being the miller's payment. He also had business buying grain, grinding it, and selling the products to those many people in the village who weren't farmers, but needed feed for a cow and pigs and ground grain for their own use.

Johann Funk, the miller, was an easygoing man, so he soon gained the acceptance of the Rosenthal community, and the majority of farmers became his customers. His motto was: "If you grow it, I'll grind it." There was keen competition in the milling business, but there were also times—especially during the summer months—when wind power was hard to come by and business was slow. Often the millers would get up at night at the merest whisper of a breeze to keep the millstone working while the blades turned. This willingness to work whenever the wind blew resulted in regular customers.

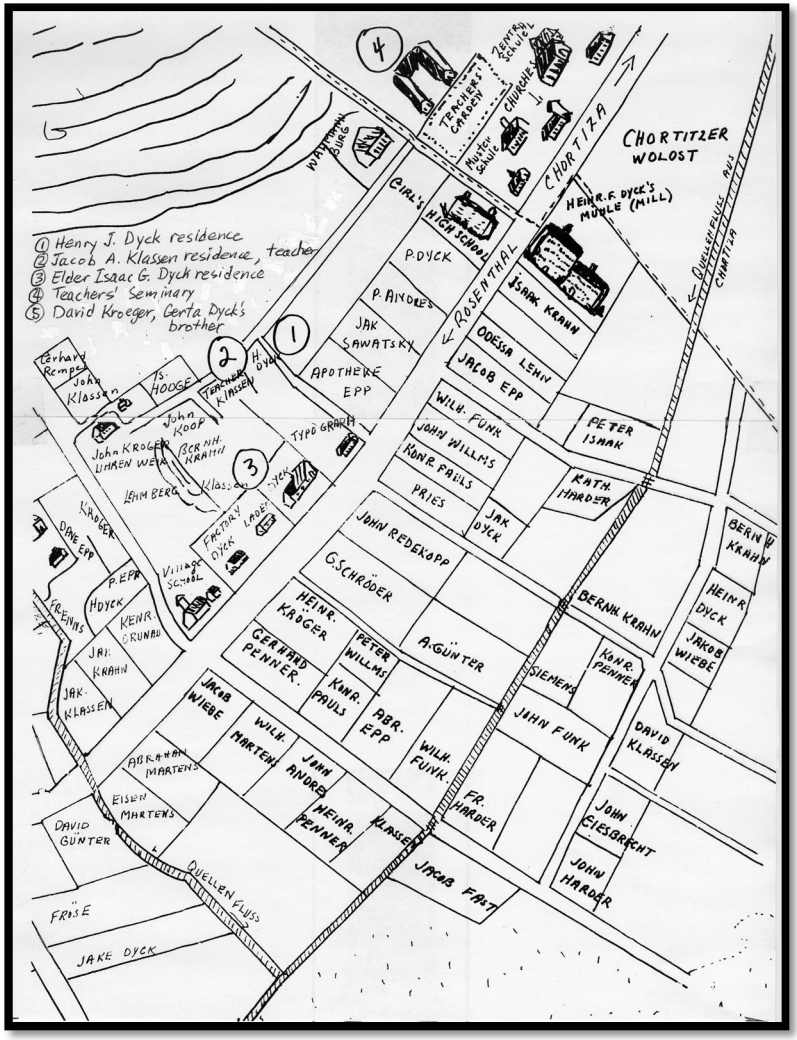
The mill rested on a stone-and-concrete foundation. Its round frame of heavy timbers sat on this base, well-covered with tar for easier movement of the mill to keep the vanes facing into the wind. The large two-yard round millstone that ground the grain was powered by the vanes. Sons were expected to help with the work at the mill, sharpening the huge millstone and filling in the wings (flaps) with boards, heavy or light, many or few, according to the strength of the wind.

Mr. Hildebrandt owned the other mill, the third generation of his family to do so. He was not hard-pressed to make ends meet, having other financial resources. The Hildebrandts lived close by, so Hildebrandt and Johann became close friends.



A hand-drawn map of the village of Rosenthal (1922–1927) made by Peter Kroeger and David Peters. This half of the map shows both the Funk and the Hildebrandt windmills at the southern edge of the village.

The Funk sons helped in the mill when they grew old enough to accept responsibility. During slack times, the boys listened to the adults chatting, a significant part of their education about life.



This is the other half of the map, showing the northern half of Rosenthal. The border between the adjacent villages of Rosenthal and Chortitza is visible at the top right. Both villages were within the larger Chortitza Mennonite Colony on the Dnieper River in Ukraine.

Son Peter remembered that the grown-ups loved to talk about childhood experiences and their hardships and struggles. Mr. Penner told a story about saving the ribs from butchered cattle, then tying them to his shoes and "skating" on the frozen streams. It was more like skittering, for the ribs had no edge. But it was fun. The adults discussed major world events like the Boer War in South Africa, the Russian war with Japan,

and the 1905 pogroms in Russia against the Jews, which killed many. They also discussed the Bible and Christian life. He remembered hearing discussions about biblical prophecy and the word *bekehrung,* or conversion, used freely and often, for a new evangelical movement had made its influence felt, known as the Mennonite Brethren. He did not understand, but remained fascinated.

All Mennonites, men and women, liked to trace family relationships, and often spent hours figuring out which family a certain person belonged to. If you knew what family line someone came from, you had the person categorized by social standing, financial means, and sometimes character. When they shifted to subjects not intended for younger ears, Johann would indicate with his head that it was time for his young son to find something else to do.

Real visiting was done Sunday afternoons. After working hard for six days, Sunday meant a day of rest, beginning with a church service in the morning and time with relatives and neighbors in the afternoon. Food had been prepared the day before, often a big pot of potatoes with jackets. Ham was always ready to slice. A big dishpan lined with a tea towel full of *tweeback* and a pot of coffee could feed any number of guests. People took time to enjoy one another and build close relationships. Grownups sat for hours talking, the men in one room discussing horses and crops and the women in another talking about children and flowers. Often the women strolled through the hostess's flower garden to admire and request seeds. And everyone cracked sunflower seeds like a pro, seeds in one side of the mouth and shells flying out the other. This skill was learned in early childhood. The children were booted out into the yard to play.

Susanna probably baked bread or *bulkje*, along with other bread products, at least three times a week in an oven fired with straw or vine trimmings. The huge loaves of bread were stored on a rack above the oven. During the week, the family ate rye or whole wheat bread, but Saturday meant honey *tweeback* eaten with generous globs of jam, jelly, or honey. Grain products were a major part of the Mennonite diet, influenced by their Russian neighbors. Words like *arbus* (watermelon), *borscht*, *wreninkje*, *holloptsee*, and *paskje*, favorites of Mennonites and others today, are all Russian words. Vegetables came in one category: potatoes, often served twice a day, boiled with jackets at noon and fried in the evening. In fall, dill pickles were added to their meager vegetable list.

A favorite meal when I was a child was *flinzen*, or large pancakes the size of a platter. In her simple Hague, Saskatchewan, home decades later, Grandmother Susanna layered a stack of these large pancakes with

cherries like a tiered cake and cut it in wedges to be eaten with sour cream. She always wore a long, full apron over her ample abdomen, long enough to serve as a towel, a dust cloth, or to wipe the dripping nose of a youngster, or maybe even her own. I can remember her shoving that huge loaf of *bulkje* tightly under her arm and cutting off a slice as needed. Meals began with a short prayer and ended when Susanna said a loud *mahlzeit* (blessed meal time!), signifying to guests the last course had been served.

The villagers dried their own fruit (apricots, apples, cherries, peaches, and pears) for the winter because canning jars were unavailable. Watermelon, a small size, and cucumbers were pickled in large barrels. Watermelon juice was boiled down to a syrup to use as a sweetener. Sliced cucumbers were served with clabbered milk. Decades later, in Canada, when my father was homesick for Mother Russia, my mother cooked him a huge pot of wheat (*kasha*) then fried and served it with *jreewe* (cracklings or pork rind). Then he was a small boy again, sitting at Mother Susanna's table in the house near the windmill, in Rosenthal, enjoying her love and tenderness. He and his mother remained close until her death.

School

During the school term, the Funk boys and Liese attended village school regularly, wearing simple *schlorre* (wooden sandals) like many other children. Then came high school (*zentralschule)* in Chortitza, which also served as a teacher training institution for the boys. Because the *fuersorgekomittee* (leadership committee) for the district frowned on coeducation for high school, the *maedchenschule* in Chortitza opened in 1895 with 17 girls, which climbed to 116 in 1913. The boys' school had the more intense curriculum. Learning was mostly by rote memorization and the religion classes emphasized memorizing the catechism. Students were not encouraged to explore the world of ideas. Non-farming families in Chortitza agitated for higher educational standards. The more prosperous farmers wanted their sons to have technical training in milling or business, not teaching.

On the street, a high school student was easily recognized by his dress. High school meant shoes, not *schlorre*, over-blouses with a belt and a jacket, much like a double-breasted suit coat with collar and large lapels. Caps were similar to those of policemen. When meeting a teacher or preacher, the student was expected to lift his cap, even if he were across the street. If he didn't, he would be reported to the teacher, who would

admonish him to be more respectful. Of course, the same information would be relayed home via brothers and there, the forgetful boy would receive a second admonition. Few homes had books beyond a German Bible (Luther translation) and hymnbooks. Young Peter Funk walked a long distance in the evenings to a home with an atlas he was allowed to examine—although neighbors were certain he was visiting the young daughter.

For these Low German-speaking children, school at age seven also meant learning two new languages: High German and Russian. Both languages were taught beginning in the first grade. The government required that subjects like grammar, arithmetic, history, geography, and reading and writing be taught in Russian. To this curriculum, the Mennonites added grammar and German reading and writing, as well as music and religion. Saturday forenoon was devoted to religion, mostly memorizing catechism. This course of studies meant longer school days than expected of today's children.

Since these schools were financed and operated by the Mennonites, only children of Mennonite parents were admitted, although occasionally children of other religious persuasions, like Jews, were allowed to attend by special arrangement. They spoke Low German like the others but did not have to attend German religion classes. Not many native Russian peasants in the surrounding areas attended school. Illiteracy was high among them, which created a social barrier between them and the educationally-minded Mennonites, who expected every child to be able to read, write, and do sums.

Teachers were held in high esteem in Mennonite villages, and little Abe knew this. The teacher was always right. When it came time for Abe to begin first grade, Mother Susanna cleaned him up and pushed him out the door. The terrified little seven-year-old dragged his feet all the way to the school building in anticipation of the whipping brother Nick warned him he would receive. When the teacher received him kindly and the day passed without incident, he knew he'd been conned.

A rare event long looked forward to by the higher grades in Osterwick, and possibly also Rosenthal/Chortitza, was a trip by wagon to the large island of Chortitza on the Dnieper River. Few village children ever left the borders of their little community, so this event was eagerly awaited. A passel of happy youngsters loaded onto wagons and made their way to Rosenthal and then on to the river where a ferry took them across to the island to picnic, swim in the river, and sit under the legendary 700-year-old oak tree where the ferocious Cossacks had once gathered to plan strategies (see photograph on page 22). This oak tree

became the gathering point for many picnics and similar gatherings. Some historians surmise the revolutionaries of 1917–1919 patterned their ferocious behavior after these early Cossacks.

The year John began high school, his cousin, David Schellenberg, moved in with the Funk family also to begin school that fall. Another cousin, also a John Funk, joined these two strapping young boys. They slept on traditional sleeping benches in the *sommastow*, which opened up into doubles for the night. Bedding was always piled into a high stack when not in use and covered with a spread. For a time, Susanna and Johann had eight boys around their table.

On the high school ground was the house where the Russian teacher, Peotr Philippovich Buzukh, lived. He taught botany and nature study. In his spare time, he dabbled at taxidermy. Next to the school was what we would today call the Municipal Office and, behind it, the home of the Chief of Police. One morning, the boys arrived at this spot sensing lots of excitement as villagers milled around the house. The chief had shot his family, his mistress, and himself. Bodies were lying all over the floor, so they went to check it out. Sure enough, by peering through a window they could see the bodies of several children and a woman slumped on the floor. More bodies were reported to be in another room they could not see. No one seemed to be in charge, so school boys flocked from window to window to take in the gruesome sights. It gave them lots to talk about. Little did they know that in a matter of years, such gruesome sights would not be unusual.

From time to time, visitors from Canada—Mennonites who had migrated to that country in the 1870s—returned to the Mennonite colonies to visit friends and relatives. They described conditions in Canada conducive to the type of agrarian life Mennonites enjoyed in Ukraine. Such information was soon passed around from household to household. Young John and his cousin Dave often discussed their future in view of the fast-changing political conditions in Russia. They were convinced they would have a better chance of making a living by going to Canada, so they badgered their fathers to loan them money. They would repay the loan as soon as they got work there. Their parents dismissed the request as frivolous and thought no more about it. But the boys' minds kept searching for ways to leave Russia. Signs of social and political unrest were cropping up all around. Something was about to explode.

They were good students with vivid imaginations, so for them, every day was an adventure. After school, with as many recruits from their classmates as possible, they would besiege a nearby hill. Their

military maneuvers and exciting war games were always described in detail to their younger brothers, who idolized and envied them. The two Johns became known as the bravest and most daring young men of the village. They were 14 years of age.

One day the two Johns, both excellent students, didn't show up for high school. The teacher sent word to their parents that the boys had played hooky and should be whipped. Even though the boys had never missed a day of school, the parents did not become alarmed until supper came and went with no sign of the two boys. Mealtime usually brought everyone home to the house by the windmill. When darkness fell, the anxious parents with friends and relatives organized search parties but found no trace of the two boys. "Have you seen the two Johns?" they asked everyone. John's mother and father sat in the growing darkness and worried where they might be. The boys had disappeared.

At daybreak, word came from a fisherman down the river that the two boys, each about 14, had been seen swimming and diving from a boat the day before. This wide, slow-moving river with sandy banks was ideal swimming territory and tempted many a schoolboy who could almost see it from the schoolroom. The officials decided the boys must have been sucked into the whirlpool about which all children were warned. Dragging operations with fishing lines yielded nothing. The villagers decided to wait until the river gave up what it had taken. Usually in about six or seven days, drowned victims, bloated by the water, floated to the surface. In the meantime, coffins were built and preparations begun for the funeral.

But the witch-aunt from Einlage whom I mentioned earlier, *Hakjsrampelsche*, made a nuisance of herself by insisting the boys were alive. "Johann," she said, "the boys are alive. They will come home." She could "see" them walking the streets of a big city and they would soon be home. No one believed her ridiculous pronouncements.

Almost a week after the boys' strange disappearance, Susanna was rolling out cookie dough, preparing for many funeral guests, when a noise outside caused her to look up. There, by the gate, looking well and very much alive, stood her son John and his friend John. Her scream of joy brought the family running. Amidst the hugging and exclaiming was the occasional hint about applying the *malkjbrat* (thin wooden boards used to separate and stack pans of milk for skimming off cream, and easily repurposed for other uses) to the seat of their pants. The boys were given a good meal and put to bed.

After much questioning, the boys confessed they had gone to the big city to enlist in the army. Their Russian teacher, a returned soldier,

had so inspired them with tales of war heroes that they decided to join the army and become war heroes. When the officers at the recruitment center realized the boys had no papers from their parents or passports, they laughed and told them to go home and "grow a little more" before they enlisted. Ashamed and embarrassed, they didn't know what to do. They had no money, no food, and knew no one in the city.

As they walked the streets of the city, they searched for a solution to their problem. They feared to approach strangers. Hunger finally forced them to tell their story to a friendly-looking priest standing outside his church's impressive edifice. The old man took them to his quarters, fed them, and let them spend the night. The next morning he took them to the railway station and sent them home, warning them about the severe punishment meted out to anyone caught running away from home. They would be tethered to a horse with hands tied behind their back and forced to run as a policeman urged the horse on. Death was the usual outcome. This terrifying prospect was enough to scare them into forgetting about joining the army just yet. They hitched a ride part of the way back to Rosenthal and were overjoyed to be home again. They got to eat their own funeral cookies.

Several years later, after the Russian Revolution and the famine, oldest son John, now a married man with two sons, was one of the first in the Funk family to leave for Canada, leaving far behind his childish dreams of becoming a war hero. Now his concern was freedom and safety.

Home life

There were many chores for the boys, even without a farm. The cow and pigs had to be fed and the stable cleaned. The women milked the cows. The chickens had to be fed and eggs collected. Then there was a good-sized garden and fruit orchard to hoe. Susanna needed water brought in from the well as well as fuel for the ovens from the barn. Whichever son was nearest was pressed into service to bring in more straw or dried manure from the barn. The littler boys had a way of disappearing when they knew the fire was burning low. Homes had no coal, oil, or electricity. Each village resident was assigned one tree per year in the nearby forest to cut down for firewood. Someone with horses hauled the wood into town for them.

The large brick heater in the center of the house next to the kitchen was very important. It extended into the living room, with space on top of the fire-box for baking and a large chimney for smoking hams and

sausages. The heater was fired from the kitchen side using any kind of fuel, although most Mennonite homes used straw, and, at times, manure. Everyone had at least one cow, from which all the manure was zealously saved. About July or August, when the weather had turned hot, straw was mixed with moist manure and spread into a large pancake about a foot thick. After it had dried for a few days, the whole family was mobilized to tramp it down. People with big feet had an advantage. Of course, if the manure wasn't really dry, the procedure got a bit messy, and if someone pushed the brother next to him a little too hard, the accident provided time out for laughter and a visit to the river to bathe. The mixture dried for several weeks, after which it was cut into squares, then stacked and dried. This form of fuel could be compared to modern pressed-wood logs.

Summer bathing was no problem in a family with many sons, because the boys spent a lot of time in the Dnieper River. Winter was a different story. About once a month, usually on a Saturday, Susanna announced bath time in no uncertain terms. How did she decide when this procedure should take place? Were the boys beginning to smell rank? The boys hauled in a homemade tub, just big enough to sit in. Next, they carried water into the house from the well and heated it in pots and pans on the built-in clay stove. John, the oldest son, stepped into the crystal clear water and Susanna poured water over him and scrubbed him with homemade soap—strong enough to take the spots off a leopard. And so on down the line. By the time it was little Abe's turn, he could almost walk on the water.

But when the chores were done, it was time for fun. The boys of Rosenthal had a wonderful time in summer creating their own fun. The six Funk boys divided into two groups: the older boys and the younger ones, and one girl who didn't belong to either group. The oldest two didn't want Peter, next in line, tagging along. Henry and Nick, the oldest of the second set of boys, didn't want little Abe tagging along. How to leave him behind? Sometimes they would sit him down some place and tell him to wait for them. They would be back in a couple of days to pick him up.

Medical care was always a problem. One Sunday afternoon, as the family's guests were leaving in their buggy, Abe tried to hang onto the back end. He became stuck in the wheel spokes and had to be disentangled, limb by limb. He was unable to raise his arm. "There's a man in the next village who knows all about bones," pronounced his mother, Susanna, and off they went to the bone doctor. Medical care consisted of whatever and whoever was available. Once, while playing in

the hayloft, Abe's young friend Peter Pries fell through a hole onto a pile of logs. He received a bad cut. Since no doctor was available, his father sewed the cut together with needle and thread—without anesthetic.

The chiropractor already had a patient, a little boy with a dislocated jaw. Abe watched as the man felt all round the frightened youngster's face and then, suddenly, hit the boy on the side of the face. The child screamed bloody murder but his jaw was back in place. He used the same approach on Abe. Abe also responded with a yell when the blow came. But his arm was useable again.

One summer, the boys' Grandfather Peters offered Jake a summer job in exchange for board and room—not an unusual arrangement. His older brother was home during the summer and would do his usual tasks. Young Jasch worked as general handyman, riding horses and herding cattle. All summer he dreamt about the wonderful shiny leather boots he would buy with his earnings. He was tired of clomping around in homemade wooden *schlorre*, the simplest type of footwear, consisting of a wooden sole and piece of leather over the toes. In fall, his grandfather said it was time to go back to school and gave him one small ruble for the summer's work. Like the little pig who went to market, he cried all the way home. One ruble could not purchase new shoes.

His cousin, David Schellenberg, had the same experience with the same grandparent. When he was about 13, Grandpa Peters offered him a summer job to help with the harvest. His assignment was to load the sheaves on the wagons and make sure the eight horses pulled the threshing treadmill they were hitched to evenly. Nothing was said about pay, but he had dreams of pocket money, and lots of it. Keeping eight horses on the treadmill pulling evenly from sunup until sundown was difficult for a young boy. After two months of hard work, he was ready to return home to Osterwick and school. Grandpa Peters called him into the house and placed three rubles into his hand for two months of hard work. Like Jake, he had the distinct feeling he had been underpaid.

When boys of the village got together, they spent most of the time in the stable looking at the horses, all parts—head, mane, tail, and legs. But Jake was not interested in horses. He told his mother later, "A horse is a horse; a cow is a cow—that's all. What interests me is why a red cow eats green grass and gives white milk. How do you figure that out?" He was not a farmer. He didn't enjoy farm talk. He was not going to be a farmer. None of the six Funk boys became farmers.

Christmas was a highlight in the village. On Christmas Eve, everybody went to church. For weeks, the children had been memorizing poems and exercise drills. Then the time came to show their skills. Proud

parents, dressed in their Sunday best, came to hear their youngsters perform. The Christmas tree was decorated with homemade ornaments, such as angels, stars, and chains made with colored paper painted by the children. On Christmas Eve, the homemade candles on the tree were lit. How the church didn't burn down is a mystery. Two men were kept busy putting out fires with wet cloths. After the program, on the way out, each child received a couple of cookies and, once, each received a walnut.

Some villagers had large gardens outside its boundaries, including Johann and Susanna. Mennonites and watermelons migrated toward one another. Some villagers planted acres of them. Where you found Mennonites, you found watermelons, which were eaten raw, pickled, or made into syrup, a main source of sweetening for baking. Many a meal consisted of only watermelon and *rollkueaken*. In fall, the choicest ones were gently carried to the house like newborn infants. Buried in grain stored in the attic, some kept until almost Christmas.

Though Nick and Abe, the two youngest boys, had their little spats, many times they banded together. One fall, some of the choicest watermelons began to disappear. Young Nick and Abe decided to do something about the thievery to ensure enough watermelon for the family. No one was going to rob them of their choice food. They carried lumber to the garden and built a little lean-to big enough to sleep in. That took most of the day, so that night they slept in their beds at home.

The next night, they hesitantly retreated to the minimum security of their straw beds in the shanty, certain they saw a human being in every shadow. But the day's exertions soon lulled them to sleep. Suddenly Abe woke and poked Nick. They listened hard. Footsteps. They kept coming closer and closer until they stopped at their tiny door, only large enough for a child. Hands wiggled the boards that held this flimsy contraption together. Terror struck their young souls. They really didn't want to protect the watermelon anymore. But what could they do so far from home?

Then they heard their mother's voice calling, "Come out, boys." Two comedians trying to get out of a door at the same time couldn't have put on a better show than Nick and Abe. Susanna agreed the boys were doing a good job guarding the watermelons, but she would feel better if they were safe at home in their beds. Never before had they walked back to the house so willingly.

Cousin David Schellenberg had the same problem regarding fruit disappearing from their family's orchard. His father and a friend built a shelter in a hedge, probably more substantial than the one the boys had made and so well hidden it wasn't noticeable walking past it. The one

man brought a shotgun—a muzzle loader, loaded with rock salt. At dusk, they met in the shelter and waited quietly for someone to appear. For several nights, nothing happened.

Then one night, hearing voices they took the shotgun and silently left the shelter. Two men were quietly picking fruit nearby. They sneaked up on the thieves from behind and let them have a blast in their backsides. The two fruit-pickers screamed loudly, then took to their heels.

The next day, the orchard owners heard via the village grapevine that two hired men at the other end of the village had been seen sitting in watering troughs, dissolving the salt out of their bottoms. Yet that was the way justice was meted out in the villages at the time. You simply took the bull by the horns, or the thief by his backside, and corrected the situation as quickly and cheaply as possible.

A bigger event than Christmas was hog butchering day, which provided meat for the winter. Everyone, including little children, got up before daylight because tasks were lined up without end. School children were excused from school. Father Johann borrowed a big cast iron kettle, probably passed from household to household as needed. This was placed on top of an outdoor firebox built with bricks and filled with water. A lot of hot water was needed for the day's procedures. Even the birth of a baby didn't create the same level of excitement.

The squealing hog was brought from the pen to a man with a fancy knife, who felt for the jugular and plunged the knife in. Blood spurted in all directions. The pigs were scalded and scraped. Next, women and girls wearing dark aprons if they were working outside (inside workers wore white), showed up for the main business of the day—to turn the pig into hams, sausages, spare ribs, headcheese, lard, *jreewe*, and *jreeweschmolt*. At the end of the day, the hams and sausage were hanging in the smoke house and the workers were feasting on fresh pork products. Cholesterol was not a concern for these hard workers. This was the kind of food my father loved almost to his dying day.

Johann and Susanna did what they could to provide a good home for themselves and their family. They lived in a simple house, similar to other Mennonite homes. Johann provided and Susanna contented herself with what he brought in. Johann was reserved and tolerant. Susanna was lively, quick, and more outgoing. They loved and respected each other and worked well together. The seven children knew they were loved and appreciated. There was freedom, fun, and much talking and teasing among the growing children. If a guest happened to enter the house at suppertime when all seven children sat on benches around the

table, Johann would say proudly, a broad smile on his face: "Don't the children look good and healthy?" He and Susanna were proud of their brood.

Watermelon Pickles

The Russian Mennonites grew small watermelons (arbus), two to three pounds and about the size of a melon, which they pickled in a large barrel with brine and dill to be later sliced and eaten. Pickles, including cucumber and beet, were a standby side dish at every meal. Later, when these Mennonites dropped their traditional diet in favor of a more American one, they also discarded the probiotic benefits of fermented foods, like sauerkraut in abundance and clabbered milk by the gallon, often eaten with sliced raw cucumbers or sugar and cinnamon. My father ate bowlful after bowlful. Today I buy yogurt in little cartons in the supermarket.

My mother never made watermelon pickles, but she did make dill, sweet gherkins, beet, mustard pickles, and many others. She liked experimenting with new recipes she found in Canadian newspapers. A meal was always accompanied by pickles as an aid to digestion. Here is my sister Anna Funk Kruger's recipe for a modern version of watermelon pickles.

* * * * *

Cut off green rind and inner pink portions of a large watermelon. Cut into cubes. Soak overnight in a salt solution of 4 tablespoons salt in one quart of water. In the morning, drain and rinse well. Cover with cold water, bring to a boil, and drain.

Make a syrup of:
6 cups sugar
3 cups cider vinegar
4 sticks cinnamon
4 tsp whole cloves
1 tsp mustard seed
1 tsp allspice berries
1 piece of ginger root

Tie spices in cheese cloth and simmer in syrup for 5 minutes. Add the watermelon pieces and cook until tender. Fill jars and seal.

6

"We have no children to give away"

Peter describes his mother, Susanna, as big and strong—and short-tempered. On one occasion when the boys were kicking up a ruckus, she took their friend, Pete Penner, by the neck and seat of his pants and threw him out the door. She made frequent use of the *malkjbrat* to keep her six boys in line. Johann was the opposite of Susanna. He was friendly, but reserved in nature. He never overruled what she had decided for the children or contradicted her, and she never contradicted him.

Nearly everything in a Mennonite home was homemade or made by someone in the village. Johann made the furniture and footwear. His suits were sewn by the local tailor. Pots and pans and notions like needles were bought from peddlers who traveled from village to village. Water was softened by pouring it through ashes. Medicine was limited to a few items, Susanna's three cures: 1) A spoonful of honey for a sore throat; 2) A spoonful of some brown syrup, supposedly made from alpine herbs and bitter roots, labeled *alpenkraeuter,* was used for anything and everything; and 3) "Go sit in the outhouse until you feel better." Her theory was that if the illness doesn't kill you, it is not fatal.

Keeping the family supplied with footwear was no small task. In general, the boys went barefoot or wore *schlorre* inherited from an older sibling. As each boy grew old enough, an older brother would teach him to make his own. Abe was certain he had been born with *schlorre* on his feet. Some people made them with leather soles so that they had little more give to them. Because wood does not bend, brother Henry made his with the wooden sole in two sections and a piece of leather over the joint to give a little yield. The soles were made from willow trees, easy to work with. Sometimes worn-out *schlorre* needed only a half sole, which was shaped and fitted before being attached with wooden pegs. When done right, the sole never came off or scratched the floors. Children soon learned to run fast with these clumsy shoes.

Susanna sewed most of her own clothing with a hand-turned Singer sewing machine, from underwear to dresses, as well as clothing for the boys. She was a quick worker and never got stuck figuring out how to do something. My father inherited this trait from her. He also always had a quick solution to problems—sometimes too quick. When she was busy sewing, the boys were assigned to kitchen duty, often under pressure, bringing in wood, peeling potatoes, stirring food, and so forth. But they had to do it. They had no older sister to act as housemaid. Stockings were knitted from strong, coarse wool, which provided great warmth. As soon as each son was old enough, he had to darn his own socks. Maybe that is why my father insisted we girls learn to darn. This was woman's work. He had had enough of it as a boy.

Johann and Susanna had strong moral and spiritual principles for their family based on biblical teaching. When the boys told Susanna how the boys in the village smoked, drank, and danced, and yet belonged to the same church they did, she wasn't swayed. The Funks had principles and stuck to them. "Yes, it is very sad, but everyone will have to give account to God for himself," she would respond, quoting Jesus' words, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." She and Johann had grown up without smoking, drinking, and dancing, and she expected her children to fall in line. She often sang hymns to herself as she worked.

Some evenings when the wind was blowing steadily and Johann was grinding grain into flour, Susanna gathered the four youngest children around the table to tell them stories. Mill work was determined by the wind, not an eight-to-five schedule. The coal oil lamp threw a soft light and drew them into a tight circle. Her stories were her way of teaching them how to deal with life. She wanted them to learn to think for themselves. A common proverb she cited was: "A dead fish always swims with the stream."

A few of her stories have survived. *A man and his young son were walking to the next village. Along the way, they saw a horseshoe lying on the road. The father told the son to pick it up. "Too hot," said the boy. Without a word the father picked it up.*

At the next village they stopped at the blacksmith, where the father sold the horseshoe for 25 kopeks (10 cents). With that money he bought some cherries at the store. As they continued their walk, the father led the way, eating cherries, occasionally dropping one, which the son picked up and ate. When the cherries were all gone, the father turned to the boy, "You were too lazy to bend down once to pick up the horseshoe, yet you bent down a dozen times to pick up cherries. Let this be a lesson to you."

From somewhere she produced stories about the Knights of the Round Table in merry England. *One knight wasn't as big and strong as the others, so they poked fun at him. In anger, he pulled out his sword and slammed it on the table, killing seven flies. His mind exploded with an idea. He painted the words, "Sieben mit einem Schlag" (seven with one blow) on his sword. When the knights read those words, they drew back in fear and quit picking on him.* Susanna's moral: If you haven't got brawn, use your brain.

In another story three men applied for a job. Susanna's stories always had three men applying for a job. *Before the manager called them into his office, he placed a broom in their path. The first man stepped over it as did the second. The third man stopped, picked up the broom and placed it against the wall.* Susanna's question: "Who got the job?" Her moral: Don't wait to be told what to do. Be alert and see what there is to do. Jacob must have heard this story often, for it was the rule of his life, especially later on when he hired clerks to help in the store in Blaine Lake. You always looked for work. You didn't let work find you.

Young Abe used to eat green apples in the orchard behind the house until he was sick. Susanna decided to cure him of this habit. A woman who was about eight months pregnant passed the house. "This is what is going to happen to you if you keep eating green apples," she told him firmly, pointing to the woman's huge belly. Of course, he believed her. For years every time he saw a pregnant woman, he told himself: "Oh, oh, too many green apples."

Although Susanna did not play favorites among the children, she openly admitted, "*Jasch es mien Jung*" (Jake is my boy). He could do no wrong, and didn't get the *malkjbrat* as often as the others. She was protective of him because of his so-called handicap, a big one in that culture. He was left-handed, almost a moral issue at the time, for teachers were sure that a child could switch hands if he wanted to. If he didn't, his problem was disobedience.

Jasch was placed in a desk next to a strong-minded right-handed boy who had been instructed to poke him hard every time he used his left hand. The teacher rapped his knuckles firmly when he saw the left hand reaching for the pencil and even resorted to tying it behind his back. At recess, he was not chosen for the ball team because he was not allowed to bat with his left hand and made a miserable job as a right-handed batter. He suffered so much humiliation at school he quit after grade school. Education meant pain. He wanted no more of it. But he did end up being ambidextrous for the rest of his life. I sometimes watched him paint. If his left hand couldn't reach a corner, he switched to his right hand and finished the job.

Staying home meant being Susanna's helper with laundry, jerking the handle of the washing machine back and forth for what seemed like hours, gardening, watching children, or even helping Johann in the mill. Johann told Susanna, "Jake is a good boy, but he is always a little too much in a hurry in handling the bags of grain. If you grab them wrong, you are liable to hurt yourself. The mill has to be stopped slowly. Jake sometimes puts the brakes on too fast, causing the wing to sway back and forth and putting the equipment in danger of breaking." At mealtimes, he was the first to finish, a habit that continued throughout his life. To make eating easier, he always sat at a corner so he didn't bump anyone with his left hand. Neither Johann nor Susanna were bothered by his left-handedness.

Despite his failings, he was good at mathematics. One day his father went to Dyck's store, the largest store in the village. Mr. Dyck unexpectedly asked, "Can Jake come work for me as a clerk?" Clearly someone had been watching this energetic left-handed young boy who didn't go to high school like other boys his age. He had impressed the owner when his father had sent him to the store for some item. Johann rushed home to tell Susanna, also much surprised at the offer. Their Jake? Their left-handed Jake? The boy who was always running ahead of himself? They decided if Jake wanted to work for Mr. Dyck, they would not stand in his way.

It did not take Jake long to move into a room at the Dyck home. He became a happy boy—he had a job that earned him money. Mr. Dyck was pleased to have him. Once brother Peter visited him in the evening when he wasn't working. Peter rang the doorbell by turning the handle, and entered to find his feet sink into soft carpet. He couldn't even hear his own steps, unlike in the Funk home, where *schlorre* on wooden floors made clattery noises all day. Jake had a pleasant room, very different from the room he shared with his brothers at home. Lucky, lucky Jake.

One day, when Johann was in the store, Mr. Dyck confided in him that he and his wife wanted to adopt Jake into their family, not an unheard of custom in those days. Relatives and friends with no children often found orphans or children in large families to accept as their own. Johann was shocked and Susanna even more so. Susanna stood tall and solemn that evening at suppertime and assured her family, "We have no children to give away." All were wanted. Nothing more was said about the offer.

Some months later, for some reason, this store closed and Jake went to work at the Neuendorf Cooperative Store (*konsum*) for about one-and-a-half years before moving to the Osterwick cooperative in Kronsthal,

where he lived with his maternal grandparents. From here he transferred to a Schoendorf store for about two years.

The wife of an employer enlisted him to push the baby carriage to a home she wanted to visit. Roads were rough in those days and sidewalks nonexistent. Pushing a baby carriage was hard work. Their path led past the local school at recess, where Jake's former schoolmates were outside playing. Embarrassed to have them see him doing women's work, he accidentally-on-purpose pushed the carriage too hard and it overturned. He was never asked to be a pram pusher again.

Jake learned as a growing boy that the store was the social hub of the community, where people came to share stories, just as the mill where his father worked was a place to unload burdens as well as grain. When business was slow, customers took time to tell funny, difficult, or sad stories. He heard many stories that he later told us children.

In an age when medical help was unavailable, a common difficulty was how to determine if a patient was really dead. People agonized when an ill person remained in a coma for a long time. A family member would hold a feather under the dying person's nose to check for even slight air movement, or, if that didn't work, bring a mirror close to the mouth to look for air condensation. People had great fear of burying someone alive. Folk tales abounded of later digging up a grave to find the person had grown hair and beard and nails and even scratched himself in a vain attempt to get out of the dark prison.

Ghosts and gypsies

Mennonites in the Chortitza area lived close to Ukrainians, who had their superstitions. Ghost stories were passed from generation to generation. And some crossed the ocean with the immigrants to Canada. National boundaries do not stop the accretions of heart and mind from entering. These stories became part of my early childhood in the mostly Slavic community of Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan. We children hesitated to walk in a graveyard after nightfall, and didn't dare step on a grave, even accidentally. I trembled when I heard dogs barking at night, a sure sign ghosts were walking the streets.

Susanna told the story about three boys who disappeared when she was a young girl in Kronsweide. A search party was organized and everything done to find the missing boys. Nothing. The only travel in those days was by horse, and all horses were accounted for so they had not left the village on horseback. On the third day, another friend of the boys said they had asked him to join them to meet the devil. He had

declined. Not to his liking. They returned to the home of one of the boys where the parents were absent and found the door bolted from the inside. Unable to rouse anyone they broke down the door. Inside they found the three boys lying on the floor, no signs of a struggle. Two of them were dead and the third incoherent. Although he lived to his thirties he was never able to explain what had happened in that house. Scary? For sure.

Susanna also knew another story, about a six-year-old princess who disappeared from the palace grounds of the royal family of the House of Hapsburg of Austria. An extensive search produced no clues, until someone remembered a band of gypsies had been in the vicinity recently. Palace guards were ordered to find them. After a thorough search of their wagons, they found no trace of the little girl.

When the gypsies were a safe distance from the palace, they brought the little princess out from under a pile of blankets, where she had been hidden, bound and gagged. She now faced a hard, cruel life as a beggar. The leaders figured a blonde girl would be more successful begging than a swarthy gypsy. First, she had to learn a new language, that of the Romany gypsies. Next she had to learn how to pick pockets. They taught her to remove wallets from a dummy rigged with bells. If the bell rang, she was deprived of food or punished with a whip. Sometimes a member of the gypsy band acted as the victim.

For the next few years she lived with them, moving with them through Romania and then into Ukraine into one of the Mennonite villages. While begging for money, she noticed that these people spoke her mother tongue, German, almost forgotten. She could understand them. She was determined to escape the gypsies, but to ask for help would have courted disaster. No one would hide a gypsy girl, so she hid in a wheat field. When she was missed, the gypsies took up a search but couldn't locate her. After three days they left, and the little girl, now age nine, came out of hiding and told her story. One Mennonite family took her in and gave her a good home.

Three years later, the same band returned to the village, but the little girl was kept out of sight. Later, the Austrian government confirmed that a princess of royal blood had disappeared about that time. According to Susanna, the princess became the great-grandmother of two of her grandchildren.

Gypsies passed through the Mennonite villages often. Little children were counted and kept inside. They were strongly admonished not to leave the house because gypsies were known to steal anything not nailed down. Little boys were prime targets. When Johann allowed a

gypsy woman to read his palm, Susanna hit the roof. She lost her usual easygoing manner.

When my father clerked in a store owned by Corny Pauls, he was told the story of Corny's grandmother. The Tsar had visited Jacob and Sara Hoeppner regarding the status of the Mennonites, who had recently arrived in Russia from Prussia. One day, along with the visiting dignitaries, came a handsome Russian prince who fell in love with the Hoeppners' beautiful daughter Helena. Marriage was out of the question between royalty and a commoner. Both sets of parents opposed the marriage, so the young couple met in secret. To stop the romance, the Hoeppners married their daughter to Peter Hildebrand. The young couple seemed to live happily with their children, and the prince was forgotten by the villagers. From time to time rumors floated through the community that he had committed suicide because of a broken heart.

One day, Helena took sick and died. Her body was washed and swabbed with alcohol and laid out in the summer kitchen, an unheated room, while the family waited for her children, now adults and away from home, to come for the funeral. The next day, when the children went to view the body, to their amazement they found their mother had come to life. She was sitting up, and asked for help to get down from the table, saying, "I am cold." They quickly took her inside the house, offered some hot coffee, and placed hot water bottles and a warm blanket on her. She lived another eight years, but never joked or smiled again and never discussed her return to life.

One morning, her husband woke to notice that his wife was not beside him in bed. He waited for her to show up, thinking she had possibly gone to the outhouse, but she didn't return. The whole village was alerted to search for her, but to no avail.

In the meantime, a fisherman friend who lived about 10 miles away related to Helena's father that two Russian fishermen had told him they had seen a body on the riverbank downstream. Hoeppner, unaware that his daughter was missing, went to the Hildebrands only to hear the sad news. Maybe the body the fishermen had found was that of his daughter, so they went looking.

Sure enough, the body lying on the riverbank was that of Helena, dressed only in a nightgown, four miles from home. Footprints along the shore proved that she had walked there alone.

Funeral services were held the same day the body was found, as it was already decomposing. That evening, Helena's brother-in-law was horseback riding, out looking for lost horses. As he went past the

cemetery, close to the new grave, his horse reared suddenly. Two figures in white were standing by the mound.

More details were unexplained. The night Helena disappeared, Mrs. B. Dueck stayed up late. A dog's furious barking caused her to look outside only to see two figures in white standing under the trees. She called her husband, but by the time he arrived, they were gone. That same evening, P. Wiens saw a boat on the river with two figures in white in it on his way back from fishing. Both he and his wife saw and spoke to the apparitions, but received no reply. The next morning, as a neighboring woman was milking her cow, the animal moved restlessly. She looked up to see two figures in white.

David G. Rempel, closer to the main characters of this strange story than my father, adds many more details.[10] He also relates a number of strange appearances after her death similar to those my father told me. He places this story within the region's Ukrainian folklore and superstitions, which the Chortitzer Mennonites accepted—and carried with them to their new homeland of Canada. Such stories floated in and out of my consciousness growing up and mixed with religious teaching.

By the time Jake was 18, he had gained about four years of experience, clerking in various stores in the Mennonite colony, despite his lack of a high school education. The merchandise carried by the stores in the Mennonite villages in the early 1900s was quite different from what we have now. All food products were sold in bulk only. If you wanted to buy some syrup, you brought along your own container, which was weighed before being filled. And woe to the boy who spilled the syrup on the way home. Without refrigeration, no fresh meat was sold. Long strings of dried herring hung from the ceiling. Without paper sacks or wrapping paper, groceries were carried home in a basket.

During these years when he was growing into manhood, Jake learned to provide good service and how to order products and stock shelves. He knew Low German well, having spoken it from childhood on up, but as a clerk he learned to speak Russian and Ukrainian fluently with customers who came from the outlying Russian villages. But advertising was foreign to him then in Ukraine and forever after when he managed stores in Bruno and Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan. Why would you broadcast your prices to your competitors?

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[10] The strange story of the events surrounding the death of Helena Hoeppner, daughter of Jakob Hoeppner, a Mennonite agent with the Russian government, was one my father remembered clearly and later recorded for me. His version is similar to that of David G. Rempel in *A Mennonite Family in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union 1789–1923*, 50–54. Rempel and my father both lived in Rosenthal.

Peter Nickolai Peters, seated, second from the right in the first row, the younger brother of my Grandmother Susanna. He and my father both served as army medics during World War I. Here my Great-uncle Peter is pictured with his orchestral band. In 1920, Peter, his parents Nickolai and Elizabeth, and my Grandfather Johann all died of typhus.

When the war started in 1914, my father, 18, volunteered to work on Red Cross train #195 to be with his older brother John. He was later transferred to the hospital supply depot in the city of Ekaterinoslav (see photograph on page 4). It was an important position that dealt with the buying and selling of supplies for the armed forces. He was moving up a different ladder than the academic one his brother John was climbing. By the time he came to Canada, he had many years of clerking and business management experience behind him, a real asset. But he also brought with him the old ways of doing business. And clung to them. Tightly.

Holloptsee

Cabbage in many forms, such as sauerkraut and komstborscht, was a staple in early Mennonite settlers' diets. Cabbage rolls became a much-beloved food. Today, this labor-intensive dish can be simplified by placing the head of cabbage in a large plastic bag with about ½ cup of water, and steaming for about 10 minutes in a microwave oven. Instead of tomato juice, I use tomato soup or tomato sauce—even sometimes a little hot salsa.

* * * * *

1½ cups cooked, but firm, rice
l large onion, chopped
2 tbsp butter
1½ pounds lean ground beef
1 egg, slightly beaten
Salt and pepper to taste
1 medium head cabbage
1½ cups tomato juice
Sour cream, as much as you like

Cook rice and set aside. Sauté chopped onion in butter until soft and transparent.

Add ground beef, egg, salt, pepper, and rice and mix thoroughly. Remove the cabbage core and drop the head into a pot of salted water. Cook for about 5 minutes. Drain. When cool, cut off the hard rib from each leaf and fill with a heaping spoonful of meat and rice mixture, folding up the sides, stem, and finally the tip of the leaf. Use a toothpick, if necessary, to hold the roll together.

Place the rolls in a casserole dish in a single layer. Cover with tomato juice. Cover and bake 1½–2 hours at 350 degrees. Serve with sour cream.

7

The second migration begins: Exodus into Canada, 1912

In this chapter I am going to leave Johann and Susanna Funk to dip into a brief discussion of the courageous couple who came to Canada eleven years before them, paving the way for the migration of the rest of the Funks in 1923. Without the earlier presence in Canada of Abram and Margaretha Schellenberg, my father's aunt and uncle, the life journey of the widowed Susanna, her children and grandchildren might have turned out very differently.

During the years before World War I, the Mennonites of southern Russia, present-day Ukraine, had become affluent. Historians report that these seventy-five thousand[11] or so Mennonites with Dutch and German origins lived in enclaves with their own well-organized social, educational, economic, and religious structures, largely undisturbed by national or international events and segregated from the neighboring Ukrainian villages.[12] All of that changed with the onset of World War I and the Russian Revolution.

In the early 1900s, sociopolitical conditions in southern Russian were deteriorating. The laws of the land were being flouted more and more openly, and the culprits were never apprehended. Political, social, and economic disturbances in Russia eroded the authority of the Tsars. The golden years of the Mennonites, especially evident in the early 1900s, crumbled as first one major national upheaval then another intruded on their isolated, self-contained communities.

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[11] According to Cornelius Krahn and Walter W. Sawatsky, "Russia," in *GAMEO* (2011), in addition to the 75,000 in Ukraine, there were another 45,000 Mennonites living in villages in regions to the east and north of Ukraine, bringing the total population of Mennonites in Russia at the time of World War I to be about 120,000.

[12] See references noted in footnote 9 on page 18.

As the possibility of war became apparent in the early 1900s, Abram David Schellenberg became restless. He was married to Margaretha Nick Peters, sister of Susanna Funk, my grandmother. A prosperous farmer/businessman in the area, he owned a windmill and farm in Kronsthal/Osterwick. As Abram studied the political situation, he faced the challenging specter of his five sons being called up for military duty when they came of age. Two daughters had died in infancy.

Already the full exemption from military service had been retracted and Mennonite young men were now included in conscription, although they were permitted to serve four years in alternative service as medics on ambulance trains or as forestry service workers at the expense of the colony they came from. The duties of forestry workers consisted of planting and raising young trees, keeping the forest in good condition, laying out nurseries, and tending model orchards, all as close to the colonies as possible to keep the young men in close contact with family and church. But even the alternative service provision, like some other privileges granted to the Mennonites when they entered the country in the 1780s, was becoming difficult for their leaders to hang onto. Abram did not want to see his sons conscripted for combatant military duty, which he astutely saw happening if the alternative service arrangement failed either on the part of the government or the local churches.

He began deliberating with his family. In 1911, when the unrest of the Russian masses was visibly reaching dangerous heights, he and Margaretha decided to leave Russia, the land of their birth, and reestablish themselves in Canada. Applications were begun for exit papers, which they did not receive until 1912. Abram was 41 and Margaretha 37, both in their prime and ready to start anew in an unfamiliar land. Their sons were 17, 11, 9, 4, and one year of age. All of their lives they had worked hard and saved, and they now owned their own farm and enjoyed a secure living. They risked leaving close relationships of relatives and friends behind in Russia to move to a distant land where they would have to learn a new language, adapt to a new culture, and find a new way to earn a livelihood. The monetary loss would be huge, for any money they brought to Canada would be arbitrarily discounted by fifty percent.

Abram was not the first of the Peters clan to leave Russia for Canada. The 1870 Imperial Decree that undermined permanent military exemption threatened the Mennonites' principle of nonresistance. The Canadian government assured them they could expect complete exemption from military service if they helped develop new land. The response from Washington in the United States was not as unequivocal.

About 18,000 Mennonites left Ukraine to settle in the prairie provinces of Canada (8,000) and the western American states (10,000) between 1874 and 1880. Among this earlier group was a good-sized group of extended family members.

After receiving travel documents, Abram began negotiations with the Missler Agency in Bremen, Germany, for transportation to Canada. The family made several trips to Chortitza to be checked by an eye specialist for trachoma, prevalent in Europe at the time. They received a clean bill of health, a cause to rejoice. Travel plans could proceed. In the middle of July 1912, they held an auction sale in Osterwick/Kronsthal of farm implements, household goods, horses, cattle—everything except buildings and land, realizing 3,593 rubles and 21 kopeks.

Abram arranged their outbound journey to coincide with the return to Canada of a visitor to the Mennonite settlements, a Mr. Penner, hoping to take advantage of his knowledge of English. They departed from Osterwick for Canada on July 17, 1912, two years before the war, saying a bittersweet goodbye to parents and other relatives, knowing they might never see them again. Abram's father-in-law, Nickolai Peters, drove the boys, then their belongings, and last, his daughter Margaretha and husband Abram, to the railway station to say their final goodbyes.

The Schellenberg family could only book third-class passage because they had too much baggage. After several transfers, they arrived in Warsaw, where they met Margaretha's brother Peter and said goodbye to another relative, an uncle, who had accompanied them to this point. At another checkpoint in Germany, they had to disembark the train and haul their luggage a long distance to a room where everyone, both men and women, was told to strip for a thorough examination. This modest Mennonite family, accustomed to the amenities of the more well-to-do families in Russia, found this procedure distasteful but had to consent. They had been reduced to the level of everyone else. Here, they were housed in a large room with about 60 beds. In a bathroom that held about 50 sinks and big mirrors, they prepared themselves for breakfast. They were served buns in big baskets, tea, and two kinds of jelly. All the small children were served milk.

A German train took them to Berlin, where they found themselves in a brand-new environment. They thought they had left nearly all things Russian behind them. Though they considered themselves Germans, they were mistaken for Russians because of their clothing and were soon made aware of what Germans thought of Russia. One waiter informed them that it would take only one afternoon to destroy Russia. When they replied in German, he was taken aback.

They spent a few days in the immigration hall in Germany, one of many similar halls in the area. Food was plentiful and appetizing. Butter for bread and milk for the children was always available. The days were spent sightseeing while waiting for their ship to be readied for the long sea voyage.

On August 10, at the port Bremen, ship personnel ushered them to their room assignments. Furnishings were limited. It soon became apparent to Abram and Margaretha that the *SS Frankfurt* was nothing but a glorified cattle boat. The lower deck was filled with row upon row of metal double-decker beds with straw-filled mattresses. No tables. Nothing else. Abram, with his upper-class tastes, was displeased. It was not what he had expected and thought he had paid for. After one night in this communal-like atmosphere, Abram arranged for his family to occupy several officers' cabins at extra cost but with a fair degree of comfort. Each had four beds with curtains, a sofa, an electric light, a fan, and a table. Abram paid 50 DM for each bed and hired a sailor for another 10 marks to attend to their needs on the journey. The ship's officers and crew were glad for a little extra money in spite of the inconvenience of bunking together.

Early in the voyage, the passengers were awakened one night by a terrible commotion. Another ship had crashed into them. Mr. Penner, the Canadian who had been visiting Ukraine, and David, the oldest son, were sharing a room and quickly got up in the dark, for the electricity was out. They dressed, gathered a few belongings, and headed for the stairs. Sailors were madly running down the aisles shouting for everyone to get dressed, don a life jacket, and head for the deck. On the way up, Mr. Penner's suitcase burst open and he struggled in the darkness to collect his belongings while people pushed around him to get upstairs. General confusion reigned.

Upstairs, they found lifeboats being lowered, a few with people already in them. Those passengers still on the ship began throwing baggage down to the boats, but most of it missed and landed in the water to be carried away by the current. One sailor pushed his way through the mob to get to a lifeboat. "Shouldn't women and children go first?" asked young David, sensitive to the others' needs. The sailor replied abruptly: *"Man muss sich doch retten"* (Each person for himself).

A number of ships answered the disabled ship's distress call but resisted coming close because their captains feared the boilers might explode. Fortunately, that didn't happen, but the ship was listing badly portside. In the morning, cables hooked to the ship allowed it to be

slowly towed past Amsterdam by four ships to be welcomed by crowds of curious onlookers who had heard of the disaster.

In Rotterdam, the immigrants left the ill-fated *Frankfurt* and were lodged at a hotel at the expense of the German shipping company while another ship, the *SS Noordam*, was outfitted to transport them to Canada. Abram, once again dissatisfied with their lodgings, moved his family to a hotel with six floors. Their room had six beds; meals were served in a big hall downstairs and another area provided all kinds of activities. To quell the immigrants' fears, they were told the captain of this new ship had never experienced an accident. He would get them safely to Canada, and he did. Accommodations were good because this was a passenger ship. The Schellenbergs were assigned a room with six beds next to the dining room.

The voyage from Rotterdam to Halifax was uneventful. Accommodations were much better than on the *Frankfurt*. Hallways were washed every day, and the captain and some officers inspected every detail each morning. The passengers received four meals a day, although many were too seasick to eat.

On Sunday, they finally saw land on the right-hand side of the ship: Newfoundland—a welcome sight. The next day, the shores of the new land were in clear sight on both sides. The long sea journey was over. A small boat moved toward them and a guide boarded the *Noordam* to assist the ship to safe harbor in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Here, all 1,700 passengers were subject to another medical examination. They also had to show identification and prove that they carried with them at least $25 per person. Those without that amount borrowed it for a few hours from a friend to take them through immigration. The important thing was to get into Canada. Here, for the first time, the newcomers saw black people—Americans.

The Schellenberg family arrived in Halifax on August 12, 1912, where they boarded a train heading west, first to Winnipeg and then to Hague, Saskatchewan. They arrived in this tiny Mennonite community, their destination, on August 17, one month after they had left Kronsthal in Russia. A son of Jacob Peters took them to his father's home, where a large welcoming group awaited them with fresh *tweeback* and coffee.

Abram's son, Abe A. Shelly (he and two of his brothers later changed their family name from Schellenberg to Shelly), writes in a memoir: *Upon reaching the Canadian prairies in August 1912, Abram and the older sons, then 18 and 12 years of age, worked in the harvest fields. Throughout that first winter they did various odd farm jobs and spent their spare time learning the English language and becoming familiar with the culture of the new land. A*

Canadian-born son was the first legal connection to Canada. [Henry was born February 11, 1914, in Saskatchewan]. *In time the whole family obtained citizenship by way of naturalization.*

In the spring of 1913, entrepreneur Abram D. Schellenberg felt he knew the situation well enough to purchase a small hardware store about 20 miles north of Saskatoon, in Osler. The older sons worked at whatever was available, such as farm labor, newsboy, grain elevator work, wrestling with locomotives in the Canadian Pacific Railway shops in Regina, clerking, and so forth. Thrift was a byword with every family member. Together they would succeed. Did he and Margaretha ever feel discouraged or doubt their decision to leave Russia? The records give no indication of this. It was always full steam ahead for this entrepreneurial businessman.

Abram D. Schellenberg's general store in Laird, Saskatchewan, 1924. Standing, left to right: my father, Jake Funk; John B. Fischer; Abram's son, Abe A. Schellenberg (later Shelly); my father's sister, Aunt Liese Funk; and Uncle John Funk.

In a few years, the sons became financially involved in a country general store, with the father and a cousin as partner. They pioneered selling for cash only, a sharp contrast to the customary "spring to fall" credit policy in the area. They expanded as profits permitted, and, in 1925, the two older sons came to Saskatoon to lay the foundation for their wholesale grocery business and, later, some chain stores known as OK Economy Stores. At one time, there were about 25 to 30 of these stores in the western provinces. Abram D. was active in the business

until 1939 when he retired. He died on February 2, 1964, at the age of 93 in Saskatoon. Margaretha died on December 16, 1970, at age 95. Into their old age, they always remained a distinguished-looking couple.

Abram D. Schellenberg and J.H. Friesen were responsible for placing 10 refugee families in homes when the second migration of Mennonites from Russia took place in the 1920s, bringing about 20,000 refugees to Canada.[13] These Mennonites also hoped for a brighter future as Joseph Stalin's new religion-less society and farm collectivization program began to spread across Russia. The long tradition of Christian faith, hard work, and private enterprise made the prospect of Soviet-style communism difficult for most Mennonite families to accept.

Abram saw to it that the refugee families he sponsored were not divided, even if they were large. The hospitality of these Canadian relatives who had come earlier was overwhelming, according to later reports. Susanna Funk with six sons and one daughter arrived in Canada in 1923, 11 years later. John and Jake, my father, were married with children. Abram and Margaretha sponsored them all. All Funk sons and daughter worked for either Central Wholesale or the OK Economy chain that Abram had the vision to start. Jake stayed with the firm the longest.

Susanna, sister of Margaretha, never forgot her sister and brother-in-law's kindness: "I am very thankful for the Schellenbergs' help when we were still in Russia and for their hospitality for all of us and for housing and food that first winter. The children all received a way to earn a living, which gave them a good beginning in this new land. I pray often that the Lord will repay them now and in eternity. Amen. Papa died, January 8, 1920." The Schellenbergs were truly a benevolent couple.

[13] See Herb Klassen and Maureen Klassen, *Ambassador to His People: C.F. Klassen and the Russian Mennonite Refugees* (Kindred Productions, 1990).

Bobbat

My mother made bobbat with a yeast batter she prepared the night before. Christmas wasn't Christmas without this delicacy, large gobs of stuffing protruding from the chicken or turkey's cavity, slightly browned. Re-warmed for a second meal, the crumbs baked crisp in fat, bobbat was a heavenly dish, fit for the gods.

Some housewives placed fried pork sausage cut into 2 inch lengths evenly throughout the batter and baked it in a shallow pan to make it a savory one-dish meal, often served with dill pickles. One folk tale has it that one village ate so much bobbat that if you pressed a villager's stomach, fire came shooting out of his ears. I made bobbat for years, then my daughter picked up the tradition, often serving it alongside modern sage dressing for diners unfamiliar with Mennonite cuisine.

* * * * *

1 cup flour
½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
2 tbsp. shortening, melted
1 egg, or two, if you feel generous
1/3 cup milk
1 cup raisins
2 tbsp sugar (optional)

Mix dry ingredients. Add beaten egg, shortening and milk. Mix well and add raisins. Stuff chicken cavity with this mixture and bake as usual. Pour extra batter into a pan and bake alongside the chicken.

8

Cry, my beloved homeland

On June 28, 1914, the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in Bosnia, a dependency of the Austro-Hungarian empire. This event set off a series of events that affected millions of people, including the Mennonites and the Funk family: widespread war in Europe and revolution, anarchy, pestilence, and famine in Russia, followed by emigration, political persecution, deportation, and suffering beyond description. The "forever summer, forever Sunday" world of the Mennonite villages vanished, never to return.

When Russia declared war on Germany in August 1914, the German-speaking Mennonites in Ukraine quickly declared allegiance to their Russian fatherland and offered noncombatant goods and services. By mid-April 1918 of World War I the victorious German armies occupied Ukraine, where the original Mennonite settlements of Chortitza and Molotschna were located.

About 14,000 Mennonite men were mobilized during the war.[14] Most of these served either in the forestry service (*Forsteidienst*) or on ambulance trains as army medics, caring for wounded soldiers. Both of these programs developed as Mennonite church leaders negotiated with the Tsarist government for ways to offer national service without comprise to their pacifist principles of nonresistance; it was an alternative form of service. Mennonites had funded and administered alternative service since 1881, shortly after 1870 when universal military conscription was introduced by the Russian government—a move that caused the first group of Mennonites to leave Russia for the United States and Canada.

[14] See James C. Juhnke, "World War (1914–1918)," in *GAMEO* (1989); and Lawrence Klippenstein and Jacob Dick, *Mennonite Alternative Service in Russia: The Story of Abram Dueck and His Colleagues, 1911–1917* (Pandora Press, 2002).

Johann and Susanna Funk's oldest son John, a tall handsome man, gentle in nature, was the first to be conscripted. After high school, he taught school for a year in the village of Reinfeld, a well-to-do area, but then decided he needed more education to continue in this profession. He was offered the job of village secretary for Nieder Chortitza and took it, packing up his few belongings to live elsewhere for the first time. But his new work did not last long.

On November 10, 1914, John left Nieder Chortitza to serve as a medical orderly in Red Cross train #195, transporting wounded soldiers from the front line to inland hospitals. Orderlies with a better education got the better jobs. Later, he was appointed as secretary of the train, a more agreeable position. Most workers on this train were Mennonites. He described the treatment of wounded soldiers to his family as "horrible."

His brother Jake, store clerk, was next to join the army, also as a medical orderly so that he could be in the same unit as his older brother. If he waited for conscription he could not choose his place of service. At the recruitment office, he was asked whether he was enlisting as a conscientious objector to avoid getting killed or whether he truly believed in nonresistance to war. He assured them he was a true pacifist.

When the young and ignorant soldiers were on leave, they often went to the city of Kiev on sightseeing tours. On one tour, Jake and his comrades visited a large but ancient Orthodox Church. At the entrance, they were greeted by a friendly priest selling holy belts that guaranteed the wearer protection from harm during the war. Jake bought one, for his own belt buckle had fallen off, but it broke almost immediately. His friends thought it was a great joke. However, as they toured the church and were taken past the Stations of the Cross, he noticed that his Russian buddies kissed the cross and left an offering, an act he considered foolish. He consoled himself that by not giving an offering he had recovered the price of the belt.

Years later in Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan, he recalled those days. *Yes, today is Remembrance Day. Yes, I was there, for four years. I saw it, all the suffering. Many got their cross—not of silver or gold to pin on their chest—but the wooden one in the graveyard in the "brother grave" or "mass grave" without a casket. I remember how we young boys who didn't shave yet were in uniform. I remember that I saw six trainloads of young boys to be sent to the front. I saw how many parents, wives, sweethearts, had come to say goodbye. They loaded at night so not many people would know about it. I watched how the people wouldn't let go of each other. I had to cry, too. Our Red Cross train followed them to the front. I remember, I remember,*

how we marched in Moscow. Nobody came to say goodbye to me. I stood all alone in Moscow, a country boy wishing I could go home.

His work at the war front was hard, and he was unaccustomed to close proximity to sick and dying people. Before, he had worked only with the well and vigorous as they came to the stores he worked in to buy supplies. On Christmas Eve, 1914, his first year in the Russian Red Cross, his unit was stationed at Fort Dubno on the Eastern front when the officers received the command to move the train to a spur line until further orders arrived.

Time stood still that Christmas Eve as the soldiers waited for the morning and what it might bring. Jake pondered to himself: Where was he and what was he doing here, far from home? The old freight train had been hastily converted into a makeshift hospital on wheels. The twelve neatly-made beds in each boxcar were still unoccupied, for they hadn't reached their destination—the war zone—as yet. He was young, inexperienced in life away from the Mennonite colonies and in taking care of the sick. He knew, however, that when the train filled with wounded soldiers, he would be expected to do his part in nursing and comforting the men on the return trip to the hospitals in Kiev, and he didn't know how. He was a store clerk, not a medical worker.

As the men waited in the hospital train on the siding for the action to begin, tense yet eager to move on, they watched military trains rush by on their way to the front. Train after train, car after car, all loaded with bright young men, sped by. Young and with everything to live for, the men were being transported to the front like cattle to be slaughtered, Jake thought.

Some outgoing soldiers stared out the windows at the passing scenery. A few waved to the orderlies in the Red Cross train, who waved back. The movement was almost mechanical. Few soldiers talked or cheered. Even in Jake's train, the atmosphere was burdened by silence as the men listened to the dull roar of cannons in the distance.

Without warning, someone in a passing train threw a bag of mail to them. At once the train became alive with excited shouting and movement as the men from all the waiting cars gathered around the canvas bag. Letters. Parcels from home. The men laughed. Then cried. It was Christmas Eve. The mail reminded them of this fact once again.

As they opened the letters and packages, memories of warmth and love in family circles overwhelmed the young men. They longed to be home in the villages celebrating Christmas with their families.

A young soldier rushed out into the snowy night and brought back a scraggly little pine tree. He shoved it into an old boot to make it stand

upright. The soldiers looked at the sad little unadorned Christmas tree, and again the tears flowed. They ached to sing the old familiar carols, but had been forbidden to use the German language (their mother tongue) because it was the language of the enemy. However, from a corner the soft tones of a mouth organ playing *Stille Nacht* (Silent Night) brought quietness to their hearts. For a short while it seemed like peace on earth.

Their peace was rudely shattered by a loud command to get ready to move. The Christmas tree was thrown out the door, the letters replaced in their envelopes, and the mouth organ silenced. The train rolled from its place on the siding to the main track towards the front.

Jake was apprehensive. What would they find there? How many wounded? How many dead? How many sweethearts, wives, and parents would never hear nor see their loved ones again? Would he be able to stand the bloodshed?

When they reached the smoking, ravaged town of Brodi on the Austrian border, scenes of horror faced them on all sides. Few buildings had been left standing. People cowered for protection in cellars or in craters made by the bombs. An old cemetery had spewed up decaying coffins. Close by, they saw massive fresh graves carefully covered with pine tree branches. Under the ground had been buried the bodies of hundreds of brave young men in this "brothers' grave."

But the time for fear, hesitation, and wondering about their own future had passed. Their work had begun. An endless stream of soldiers with haunted faces and ugly, gaping wounds waited their turn to be loaded onto the hospital train. The orderlies worked steadily until every bed, every chair, and every corner of the train was filled. Then it began the slow return journey to the hospitals of Kiev. In Jake's car, the peace and quiet of a few hours before turned into screams and moans, without the means to meet the needs of the suffering.

The train stopped briefly at a little hamlet. Terrified faces peered into the open doors of the former freight cars. One old woman, face wrinkled and weary beneath her shawl, tugged at Jake's sleeve, "Soldier, have you come from the front?" Jake nodded.

Her hand grasped his arm more securely. "Did you see my son?"

She pulled a picture of a young boy of about 15, not yet old enough to shave, from the front of her blouse. Jake examined the picture of the young boy, who wore a soldier's uniform several sizes too large, his army number written across the bottom, and then looked at the mother's anxious eyes begging him to say yes. How many times had she asked this question? How many more times would she ask it? Would she ever receive the answer she wanted to hear?

Jake lifted her hand gently from his arm as he shook his head. He turned to answer the call of a sick soldier. He could not face the mother. Christmas Day, 1914, for her, for the sick man, for himself, there was yet no peace. His work as an orderly continued for the next few years.

In 1917, after the Revolution had started, food was scarce not only among civilians but also among army personnel. The man in charge of Jake's unit returned to his home territory and brought back flour to bribe officers into giving him release papers stating he was sick. They signed off that he had a rupture and was unable to serve. So Jake was put in charge of the food warehouse at Ekaterinoslav. His earlier experience as a store clerk came in handy in this new managerial position, although he was now dealing with food products on a much larger scale.

Jake writes: *I didn't sleep in barracks because of the bedbugs so I asked for permission to sleep in an unused room in the hospital. I didn't know it had been used by typhus patients, so I got skin typhus. I was put in isolation for some time. I don't know for how long. I usually weighed about 165 pounds. One morning the fresh air blowing over me awoke me.*

"Where am I?" I asked.

"In the hospital."

The nurse told me I had lost so much weight she had carried me like a child to the other bed to make my bed. My uncle Peter Peters, who would later die of typhus in 1920, inquired about me, so the officials let him talk to me through a window and he told my father who also came to see me.

But the typhus recurred. Miss Klassen, the nurse, took my temperature. "Soldier, you were a sick man. It was very close."

I asked myself, "If I had died what would have happened?" I had no Bible. In catechism classes in school there had been a question: What will happen to your soul when you die? We memorized the answer from the story of Lazarus and the rich man. Jesus told the rich man that this day his soul would be required of him. I had to do something about my soul's salvation. But I had no one to talk to. I decided when I got out of the hospital I would find out more about this matter.

While in the army I saw a Russian soldier with a Bible under his arm. These Stundists loved to walk around like this. [The Stundists were a pietist Protestant sect with origins in Germany that spread to southern Russia about 1860. They got the name from one of the German leaders, who had introduced the idea of meeting for one hour (*stunde* in German) of Bible study and prayer. They were often confused with the Mennonite Brethren and Russian Baptists who had similar interests in spiritual renewal, even if all three groups had their peculiarities.] *The Stundists believed in praying regularly, therefore "hourly people." I asked him if I could go along*

to a meeting of believers. "Of course," he said. I went. It was mostly testimonies, singing, and praying. I didn't understand much.

An Orthodox monk, also conscripted into the army, was also my friend. I asked him, "How can I get rid of this feeling of guilt?" The monk told me to go and confess. But where should I go to? "What religion do you belong to?" None. I wasn't baptized.

On furlough I went home and knocked on the door of Elder Isaak Dyck of the Flemish Chortitza Church. I stood in the grootstow [large sitting room] *and told Elder Dyck I wanted to confess my sins to him and receive forgiveness. I told him my biggest sins. The elder ran me down and only made me feel cheap. He berated me. "Jasch, have you gone crazy? Why are you doing this? Only Catholics and Orthodox confess to priests, not Mennonites." I was sorry I had gone to him.*

What should I do now? I went home where my parents had a Bible. I read through the story of Zacchaeus and made restitution where I thought I had wronged someone. I went to my parents and made restitution to them. My parents said all children did such things. I went to the village teacher, who bawled me out. "Have you learned to write with your right hand yet?" He hadn't forgotten how hard it was for me to write with my right hand. His response was hatred. I went to the vorsaenger [the church's song leader] *and several other places.*

My furlough was over, so I returned to the field hospital kitchen, more determined than ever to find answers to my soul's needs. Someone had to have answers. One day after a service in Russian Baptist church, an older man sensed my burden and showed me John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." It was so simple. From then on I could do my work with joy. My burden was gone.

This simple connection with the Russian Baptist man may have been an underlying reason why Jake, later on in Canada, found his affections for Russian Baptists strong and for Mennonites hanging by a thread. He maintained a lifelong love affair with the Russians. He saw them always as his soul brothers.

A certain Koslowsky (from my village), whose first name I forget, went home on furlough and brought back gallons of honey. In exchange for helping him deliver it to an apartment he gave me a little for myself. He knocked on the door. "Is your husband home?" he asked the woman who came to the door.

"No," was the reply. A man entered the room in casual dress and Koslowsky put the honey on the floor. The man turned to me and asked my name, rank, and regiment. We left. Koslowsky told me not to be afraid of what had happened. I sensed bribery of some sort was going on in front of me but didn't know what to do.

I applied for permission to go home to Rosenthal. Koslowsky had also applied. Men came before the commission in alphabetical order. I was called first in my group because my name began with "F." The officer told me to undress, then weighed me, and asked some questions. The doctor examined me. He had a paper in his hand,

which he kept looking at. He asked my name and then talked to other officers about my heart. I had had rickets as a child which was obvious from looking at my rib cage. He told me to go home until they called me. They never called me.

Jake was baptized by immersion in the Dnieper River near Einlage by Rev. Jacob Janzen, housefather at Bethania Hospital, in 1918, according to his mother's records. He was now a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church and another step further in his spiritual goals.

The statue of Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) in Moscow. In 1989 when I visited, Lenin's shadow was still palpable. On December 26, 1991, after 70 years of Soviet communism, the Soviet Union was formally dissolved. Under Lenin's administration all of Russia's great wealth—including land, industry, and business—began to be nationalized or Sovietized based on Marxist principles.

The Russian Revolution started in 1917, but Jake was back at home in Rosenthal, in the house by the mill, an area which later became the center of revolutionary activity. The front between the Red and White armies shifted across the Funk yard in Rosenthal about 19 times. The family was in for unusually brutal experiences that tested the very mettle of their souls and bodies. What had happened so far was mild compared to what lay ahead.

Schnetje

Whenever a Mennonite housewife ran out of bread, she quickly made schnetje, a form of baking powder biscuits, for her hard-working family, who quickly burned off the calories working in fields or gardens. If guests unexpectedly turned up, schnetje was the solution to her problem if she was out of tweeback. Warm from the oven and nicely browned, the rich biscuits disappeared in minutes when spread with homemade jams or jellies.

* * * * *

1 cup sweet cream
1 cup milk
3 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
½ cup shortening
4 cups flour
¼ cup melted butter

Sift dry ingredients together, cut in shortening. Add cream and milk. Turn out on floured board. Knead lightly. Roll out ⅛ inch thick. Brush half the dough with melted butter, fold and roll again, repeating until the butter has been used.

Fold over a 1 inch strip of dough. Fold over again. Cut strip away from main piece of dough. Cut the strip into 3 inch lengths. Repeat for rest of dough. Bake on greased baking sheet at 450 degrees for 15 minutes until lightly browned.

9

Love in perilous times

Two actions affected the German Catholic, Lutheran, and Mennonite villages of Ukraine—all German-speaking colonists who had originated from those first invited by Catharine the Great to settle the vast and sparsely populated steppes of Ukraine, land she had annexed to her Russian empire—once the war with Germany gained momentum. First, the Mennonite colonists in southern Ukraine began to experience a smear campaign against them for being German aliens, led by the Tsarist regime. They were labeled "agents of Germany" and "enemies of the state," even though 14,000 enlisted or had been conscripted, serving Russia in hospitals and ambulance corps at the battle lines and in the forestry service. These soon gained a good reputation as hard, selfless workers. The churches and colonies underwrote the complete cost of the program, which at its peak ran to one million rubles a month.[15]

A second factor affecting the German colonists was a ruling forbidding the use of the German language in the press or in public assemblies of more than three persons or face a fine or prison term. To get around this order, the Mennonites switched to Low German in church services. In 1915, the Tsarist government enacted property liquidation laws against those who had settled as German colonists in Russia, but these were only sporadically enforced in the colonies. The Mennonites insisted there wasn't "a drop of German blood" in their veins. They were Dutch, they stated vehemently. They had been formally invited to leave their European homelands and come to farm the Ukrainian plains, a land deal that was sweetened with assurances of special privileges by Empress Catharine. Now they were being told they didn't belong. Their very Russian citizenship was in question.

[15] Juhnke, "World War (1914–1918)," in *GAMEO* (1989).

The Mennonites in Ukraine had been apolitical for a long time—or, more accurately, politically naïve. Patriotism for Mother Russia, the kind you wore on your sleeve, had never been seriously considered. They freely acknowledged Russia as their homeland after more than a hundred years in the area. They lived in self-governed, self-sufficient communities with their own institutions and industries and paid distant homage to the Tsarist regime as taught in Romans 13:1, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God." They loved this homeland and their tranquil life within its borders in their more-or-less self-contained colonies, segregated from the surrounding Ukrainian villages.

The fall of the Tsarist regime in 1917 put the Bolshevists, a strongly Marxist regime, in power and brought the dissatisfaction of the Russian masses to a high pitch. Decades of mistreatment by the upper classes and growing disparity between their way of life and those of the comparatively wealthier German-speaking colonists in the Catholic, Lutheran, and Mennonite villages invited pillaging from marauding bandits. Law and order broke down and renegade bands terrorized the countryside, looting and killing. From November 1917 to April 1918, before the German troops occupied the colonies, the Mennonites had lived under continuous fear of robbery, imprisonment, torture, and murder by these roving bandits. The situation eased somewhat when the German troops arrived in Ukraine in March 1918. During the German occupation, some churches were able to hold services and schools were kept open as much as possible.

When Germany lost the war in the fall of 1918 and its troops withdrew from Ukraine, complete lawlessness ensued. A civil war between the Red and White armies and an uprising of peasant anarchist forces competed for dominance. No one was safe.

The Red army was the army of the new government, and the Whites, a volunteer army led by General Denikin and composed of people who opposed the new regime, was supported by the former ruling classes, Orthodox church leaders, owners of large tracts of land and factories, and non-communist socialists. Some historians state that, at first, the Mennonites welcomed the Revolution if for no other reason than that now their young men doing war duty would come home—and they could disregard the recent property liquidation laws.

The well-developed, fertile area where the Mennonites and other Germans lived in Ukraine was the territory most affected by the civil war. Rosenthal was an ideal location to station troops. While the village was

situated in a deep and broad valley, its farmland was located on a high plateau, affording an almost limitless view of approaching forces in all directions except south. The Johann Funk mill sat on the top of this plateau. Over the next few years, the Red/White front shifted back and forth through the territory and even across Johann's yard in Rosenthal, giving the family a front-row seat experience. Bombs flew over their house and dead, limbless soldiers lay in their backyard, empty eyes staring at the crows flying overhead, waiting for the furor to stop.

Abe Funk was both intrigued and scared by the close combat as a six-year-old child. He and his brothers exhibited a childish bravado as well as an elemental terror of facing a horrible death. He writes:

One day when the village was under bombardment and the people were hiding in cellars, my brother Henry and I decided to find out what was actually happening. We had learned by now that the sound of a shell whistling overhead told us whether it was close or a safe distance from us. As the next one came over, we knew it was going to be close so we hid between two straw stacks. It knocked the top off one. We set the world record for the hundred yard dash back to the cellar.

Another time, Henry and I found a soldier's body in a nearby field. Henry wanted his rifle and I wanted his belt, so we lay down beside him as if we were talking to him. We couldn't make it obvious what we were doing because we would also have been shot. Inching along on his stomach, Henry dragged the rifle to the nearest bush. The soldier never objected because the top of his head had been shot off.

One day Nick, a little older than me, decided he wanted a pair of boots. What better place to get them than the battlefield. The first soldier he approached was missing one leg and one head. Nick looked at him and said, "He's no good to me. He has only one boot, and I need two." The search continued. We had one rule when scrounging around in the battlefield: Never touch a soldier's dog tags. Everything else was fair game. We only had to be sure to get the booty ahead of army medical orderlies. If they had caught us, I wouldn't be telling this story.

Nick and I wanted small lead soldiers to play war with. Our ingenuity paid off. The artillery across the river fired shells in our direction, known as grape shot, filled with lead pellets about the size of a grape timed to explode in the air wherever troops were concentrated. They were not designed to kill as much as to create havoc and terror. When these lead pellets rained down on men and horses, it took hours to restore order.

Nick and I gathered these pellets from the fields with the intent to melt them down. We didn't have matches, but starting a fire was no problem for us. We looked along the river bank until we found a specific kind of flint stone. Next we scrounged for a piece of high carbon steel, like part of a file, from my father's tool shed. We dried the pulpy center from a certain plant, which made it highly inflammable. By striking the flint stone with the steel over the dried fibers, we had a fire in no time. Another

method was to find a pail with holes in the bottom, partly fill it with dried manure, and then knock on the door of a house where we saw smoke and beg for fire [live coals].

We "borrowed" a large ladle from somewhere in which to melt the lead. The molten lead was then poured into our crudely-made boxes filled with wet sand in which we had etched the impression of a soldier. We let it cool, opened the box, and we had our soldier. Rough, no doubt, but with a little touchup, a great joy.

My brothers a little older than I and I played a crazy game, which Mother disapproved of. We positioned a live rifle shell (found out on the battlefield) firmly in the ground between our legs and then hammered the cap by placing a nail on it. Since the shell was not in a gun breech, it would explode mightily. The idea was to see who could blow the biggest hole in the ground between our legs.

Even Jake, who was quite a bit older than Henry and me, had to satisfy his curiosity about how a live shell was made. He took one apart in a shallow ditch behind the mill. If it exploded he didn't want to harm anyone but himself. He brought the detonator into the house and set it off, knowing it was harmless, but the noise frightened everyone. Mother was very upset with him that day. Another time he brought home a bunch of fireworks and set them off at night. Who knows where he got them. Unused to fireworks, but always on the alert for shelling, the villagers thought they were under attack again.

To add to the terror caused by the Red Bolshevik and White armies fighting each other in the Mennonite villages, the Makhnovists, a large roving band of anarchists, who joined the Red army late in the civil war, made the Chortitza/Rosenthal area their headquarters for a period, with tensions the highest in 1919. It is said that their leader Nestor Makhno had been a mistreated cattle herder on the estates of wealthy Mennonite landowners and was now taking his revenge.

When the German occupation ended in November 1918, the fury of Makhno, also called "Little Father," was released in full force and directed against everybody, particularly owners, proprietors, and managers of estates, businesses, and industries. For four long months, from October 1919 to January 1920, the Makhnovist army of self-declared guerrillas brought angst and anguish to the German-speaking villagers. It was composed of bands of released prisoners, professional robbers, and dissatisfied peasants, all well-equipped with arms and supplies. A large degree of vengeance underpinned the growth of the Makhnovist army as it swelled to as many as 100,000 men.[16] They forced the villagers to house and feed them until their resources were depleted.

[16] See Sean Patterson, "The Eichenfeld Massacre: Recontextualizing Mennonite and Makhnovist Narratives," *JMS* 32 (2014): 151–174, for an analysis of the social factors

After the Makhnovist army had "liberated" food, clothing, furniture, cattle, and horses from the pillaged Mennonite people in the area, the Russian peasants from neighboring villages followed to prolong the rampage. Often buildings and furnishings were burned after the owners had been beaten and murdered. Anger was vented through terror, pillage, rape, and murder, directed at anyone perceived to have exploited the Ukrainian people. The worst of these terrifying incidents occurred between 1919 and 1920. The trail of atrocities, murders, rapes, and destruction is beyond description. No woman was safe from assault. Gang rape was not uncommon. Once, for about two days and nights when the plundering and killing was at its worst, Johann and Susanna hid their daughter Liese, a lovely young 16-year-old, in their root cellar, the entrance to which was not obvious to strangers.

In October, Johann Funk was arrested by the Red soldiers for owning a revolver at a time when it was illegal to own firearms. He often had to work at night in his windmill, if the wind was blowing from the right direction. He insisted his revolver was for self-protection. Would he have used it if confronted by bandits? I don't know. He was not a hot-tempered man who vented his anger quickly. He was detained by the military for three days without food, water, or sanitation facilities. The weather was bitterly cold. Family members were allowed to bring their fathers and husbands food—bread, dried fruit, and milk—if they also had something to bribe the guards.

During the fall of 1919 and early winter of 1920, the Makhnovists dominated the Old Colony of Chortitza, continuing their plundering, raping, and killing at will. Often they came at night with a sharp rap at the door and a demand for the householder to come with them. The family knew they would probably never see their husband and father again.

Earlier, on June 30, 1918, a Mennonite conference was held in Molotschna to determine their position as pacifists in time of war. The question was whether it should be based on biblical sources or historical precedent. According to historian David G. Rempel, a deadlock led to the agreement that congregations not coerce the conscience of any member who thought differently on the matter of nonresistance. They recognized that churches and schools had not been diligent in teaching

involved in the anarchy that erupted during the revolution and civil war period, factors that implicated the Mennonite and other German-speaking villages in Ukraine.

pacifism vigorously. Every man was to decide for himself whether to remain a pacifist or not.[17]

The Mennonite people, understandably terrified by the steady onslaughts of violence and terror, were unable to grasp what was happening to them. Their peaceful world was in upheaval. Not just their lives, but also their way of life was in jeopardy. In 1919, a meeting was held in the Schoenfeld church in the Molotschna area. The word was out that the anarchists were in a nearby village and heading towards their area. What should they do? The Mennonite colonists had plenty of rifles and ammunition, some of it left by the German-Austrian occupation forces who had urged the Mennonites to learn to use weapons for protection. These troops had also drilled a number of impressionable young Mennonite men in military maneuvers, and they were ready to protect family with arms. Rempel writes that virtually every farming or propertied citizen owned a gun. A vote taken at this church meeting favored organizing some kind of self-defense force (*Selbstschutz*, or self-protection forces) for protection against highly-motivated and lawless marauders.[18]

Some historians see this moment as a blot on Mennonite history. Why did they leave centuries-old teaching on nonresistance in a desperate moment? It may have been the exigency of the moment. Lives and property were in immediate danger. Fathers, husbands, and brothers were fearful for their families and for themselves. The accomplishments of a lifetime were about to be destroyed. Was there an alternative to watching wives and daughters gang-raped and men brutally beaten and chopped to pieces? The moral-theological issue was pushed aside in favor of a more practical one. One older woman at this Schoenfeld church meeting advised everyone go home and pray. But the vote was decisive. They would defend themselves with arms. Before the group had an opportunity to test their new bravery, Makhno sent word that he would leave their village alone if they surrendered their weapons. They did, and their village was saved for the time being.

In other areas, the *Selbstschutz* of hastily-formed, untrained troops crumpled in the face of these well-armed, vicious men, experienced in killing, who came armed with rifles, sabers, revolvers, and hand grenades.

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[17] Rempel, *A Mennonite Family in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union 1789–1923*, 195–197.

[18] For a full treatment of the *Selbstschutz* phenomenon, see Lawrence Klippenstein, *The Selbstschutz: A Mennonite Army in Ukraine, 1918–1919* (Dnipropetrovsk National University, 2007); and John B. Toews, "The Origins and Activities of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in Ukraine, 1918–1919," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 46 (1972): 5–40.

Aroused to a fever pitch by a powerful homebrew, they relished the thought of spilling blood, especially of those who had sided with the German occupation army. In one village, they systematically slaughtered every male over age of 16—a total of 76 men.

In Sagradowka, my mother's home community, located about 90 miles from Chortitza, the anarchists killed a total of 214 people in one night, leaving those still alive to bury them (see photograph on page 100). Six villages were reduced to ashes. Physical mutilation and venereal disease remained for a long time to remind the people of their fate. Consequently, here, as in Chortitza and some other villages, young, impressionable young men allowed themselves to be enlisted as volunteers in the White army, thereby becoming enemies of the Red army and Russian peasants.

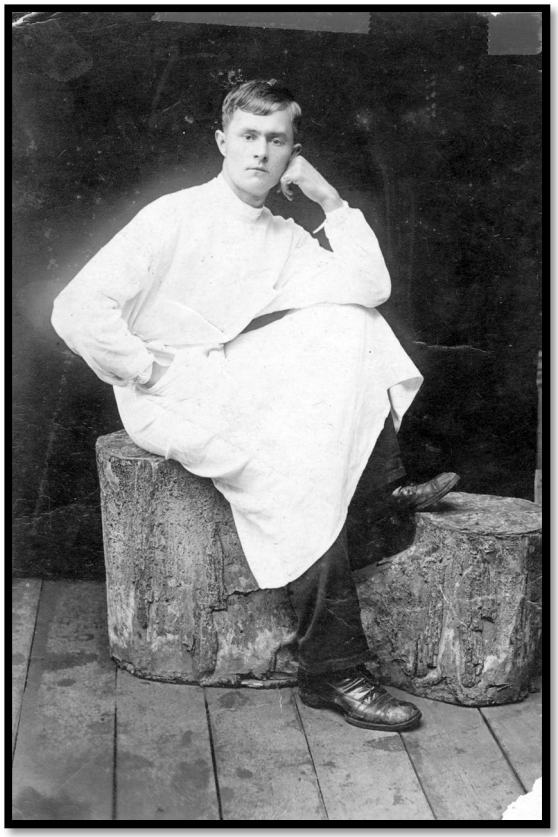
With few exceptions, the Mennonite estate owners had not treated the Russian peasants poorly. They were just treated as inferiors, not as equals. The peasants were land-poor, the "alien" Germans were land-rich. Culturally, they lagged behind the more education-minded Mennonites, who were all literate. As mentioned, weapons and ammunition for the *Selbstschutz* had come from the German occupation army, also the Russian peasants' enemy. By association, the Mennonites became the hated enemy of the Russian peasant class. Their excuse for merciless slaughter, freely offered, was that young men of the Mennonite villages had joined the *Selbstschutz* or supported the previous German-Austrian occupation forces or the White army. They were traitors to the country. Mercilessly beating and butchering person after person did not seem to affect the killers.

Elder Isaak Dyck of Rosenthal/Chortitzer, the one to whom Jake had come to confess, had several narrow escapes. Rumors floated around that he had been praying for the defeat of the anarchists, angering the bandits. How dare he ask God to destroy them? He and other villagers fled from village to village in hope of finding safety, leaving behind unfed cattle and other livestock.

The revolutionaries took over large houses, estates, and institutions and demanded the local populace feed them. Only the very poorest of the colonists did not have someone living with them. Sometimes the revolutionaries threatened to take hostages if their demands were not met. They imposed huge levies against villages already financially depleted because of the war. Communication between the Mennonite villages was difficult. Prices rose sky high and food was becoming very scarce. If your dog didn't come at night, you knew someone had eaten it.

Because the Tsarist government had lost control of the army, John Johann Funk, oldest son of Johann and Susanna, came home from service in spring 1917. The servicemen's monthly stipend was no longer being paid.

While John was still in the Russian Red Cross in Moscow, the railroad workers went on strike for better working conditions. They called a meeting, and a high-ranking Bolshevik officer arrived with six soldiers. He asked to see the leaders of the strikers. Three men promptly stepped forward. Before they could open their mouths to state their demands, the officer gave orders to shoot and they fell. "Is there anybody else who doesn't want to work?" asked the officer. No one said a word, and the strike ended. Their *modus operandi* instilled terror into any naysayer.



Jacob Funk in his medic garb, sometime before he and Anna Janzen married in 1920.

In August 1917, Jake also came home from the Russian army, and a year later, because he was not needed to help with the windmill that fall, he volunteered to work at the Bethania Hospital for the mentally ill, which was short of workers. Here, the attractive and lively auburn-haired Anna Franz Janzen had worked for several years, enjoying her work as baker.

Anna Janzen met Jacob Funk while working at Bethania Hospital. This photograph was taken shortly before their marriage in 1920.

Years later, whenever Jake saw his granddaughter, Christine Wiebe, in her broad-brimmed hat, she reminded him of his Anna in her dark green hat with the wide brim. He wrote to me: *Grandma is 78½ years old. She isn't anymore the girl I married, but I love her. How should I say, "She loves me?" Only she loves me, she only loves me, she loves only me, she loves me only.* These few words revealed the romantic side he had difficulty showing all his

life. He had deep feelings, but he didn't have the words—especially English words—or the freedom to speak them.

When she died, Anna's Bible had this poem in it, signed by Jasch Funk. Did he compose this himself or get help from someone? It sounds like his words.

Meine liebe Anna,	My dear Anna,
Wo ist die Zeit vergangen?	Where has the time fled?
So schnelle fliesst sie bei	It has flown past quickly
Als ueber dem Fluss wir sprangen	Since we jumped over the stream
Schon sechs und sechzig Jahre vorbei.	Sixty-six years ago.
Mein Herz ist voller liebe	My heart is full of love
Fuer dich, mein lieber Schatz	For you, my precious one
Du bist ja meine Anna,	You are my Anna,
Immer im ersten Platz.	Always first place in my heart.
Ich kann dir nicht mehr tragen,	I can't carry you anymore.
Die Knochen sind versagt	My joints are worn out,
Auf mein Schoss kannst aber noch sitzen	But you can sit on my lap
Wie eine Koenigin voller Pracht.	Like a queen in all her glory.
Nun bring mir mein Gehstock	Now please bring me my cane
Das ich zu dir kommen kann	So that I can come to you
Um dich Geburtstag zu wuenschen	And wish you a happy birthday
Als dein einzig liebender Mann.	From your ever-loving husband.
Dein Jasch Funk	Your Jake Funk

Their decision to marry was made late one night on a bridge over the river. She agreed to marry Jake because of his spiritual orientation and sincere commitment to Christ; she herself had gone through a time of spiritual renewal while at Bethania. But it troubled her that he was a little younger than she was. Women should be younger, not older, and she hadn't known that at the time of their engagement.

Jake had worked at Bethania for seven months before returning to Rosenthal in spring 1919. His father was sick with stomach trouble so Jake was needed to help run the mill. Before Jake left Bethania, he and Anna planned to marry as soon as the situation calmed down. They did not see one another for several months, even though the distance between them was under 10 miles. The revolutionary war situation in the area had worsened, making communication and transportation difficult.

The Funk family—as well as the Mennonites living in what used to be tranquil pleasant villages—was just beginning their most difficult trials of the war and revolutionary years. On August 19, 1919, at the beginning of the four months of extreme terror in the village of Rosenthal, Peter

and some other young Mennonite men joined the White army voluntarily in their zeal to do their patriotic duty. After all, both John and Jake had been in the government's forces during the war. But this was different. The Bolshevik regime was jockeying for control, using force as its main weapon. The names of these young men who had joined the enemy forces were soon brought to the attention of Red army officials and placed on a hit list.

On September 21, 1919, the Makhnovist army reached the Rosenthal/Chortitza area and made it their center of operations. The White army was on one side, retreating to the east, and the Red army advanced from the west.

A short while later, in retaliation for Peter's enlistment in the White army, even if only as a cook, Red army officials arrested his older brother, Jake, and butted him with some other men down the street. They were rounding up sympathizers, taking them hostage to force a showdown. The soldiers shoved their prisoners down a cold, dark cellar at the other end of Rosenthal, nearer to Chortitza. The place had no heat and the weather was getting bitterly cold outside. The room was unventilated; the stench from body wastes unbearable. Mother Susanna and Jake's siblings brought him food—whatever they could scrounge—when they were allowed. Food was in short supply all over.

Before going to prison, Jake had to take everything out of his pockets, but he had hidden a small hymnbook in the lining of his pants. He wanted something with him in prison. Sometimes he hid it under the insole of his boot (see photograph on page 107). The revolutionaries didn't want prisoners to have anything to help pass the time. If they had found it, especially it being religious literature, he would have been punished.

The small room had only one window and the prisoners, both men and women, crowded around it to find fresh air and light. He read his hymnbook when it was his turn to stand by the window, to strengthen his spirit with comforting words about another life where sorrow and sadness never entered. He had been a born-again believer only a short while, having made peace with God while in the army.

A young Jewish girl questioned him, ordering him to give his name, rank, and service record. He answered he had been a corporal carrying stretchers during the war. Then came the big question: "Why did your brother Peter join the White army, the hated Tsarists?"

"I don't know. I told him not to do it, but he did anyway. I couldn't stop him." He was returned to his prison cell.

The guards came to the prison cell in the middle of each night and called out a few names. These men and women would slowly, painfully, get up, say goodbye to their new friends, kissing each one three times according to Russian custom, and be escorted out. The ones remaining in the cellar hole would hear the terrible crack of rifles—and they knew. In the morning, a cart dragged the bodies away. Each day the cell became a little emptier and before long Jake could lie down.

Sometimes if the guards came during the day to call out names, those people were released. One early morning, when it was neither night nor day, they called Jacob Funk. He also kissed the remaining fellow prisoners in Russian fashion, three times, and weak from imprisonment and fearful of what lay ahead, staggered up the narrow stairs, sure his end had come.

Outside he was ordered to walk between two soldiers armed with rifles. They marched in step, he didn't know where. He just obeyed, heart trembling, bowels churning, knees shaking. The wall against which they killed prisoners loomed before him. Instead of going to the wall they pushed him toward the gate, opened it and told him to go home, handing him his passbook. The gate closed and he was free. But was he? Was this just a trick? He expected any minute to feel bullets, but nothing happened. He tried to run, but his legs refused to move. He was too weak. He began the long journey homeward to the house on the hill by the windmill where Mother Susanna would be waiting.

Years later, when he was in his eighties, my father wrote me that reading and speaking about the times when the revolutionaries controlled Rosenthal was difficult. "We can't [read about it]. We can't sleep at night, get nightmares. Too much comes back in our minds. To read about it is bad, but to have lived it is worse." He told that story of his imprisonment only once—to his son Jack, who recorded it.

Peter returned unharmed from service in the White army about a year later, in November 1920, to face his own possible end. He was also imprisoned by the Red army soon after his release for having been on the side of the Whites.

Abe Funk, youngest of Johann and Susanna's children, had the clearest memories of this time of turmoil and sorrow tinged with a measure of good-natured humor and the compelling innocence of a child. He recorded many of them.

One of the first things the Red army did was to eliminate whoever they thought was an enemy of the state. People started disappearing in the night. Whole families simply vanished. Some were taken to a brick building from which no one ever reappeared. Sporadic gunfire was heard from inside, and at night, wagons loaded with

corpses were seen leaving it. I went into one house after the people had disappeared. The owner must have put up a fight because his brains were splattered all over a wall.

My parents knew that sooner or later the rebel forces would come for them. We had heard our name was on a death list. We didn't have to wait long. One chilly fall evening, November 8, 1919, a group of riders drew up in front of the house. They seized my father, but before they took him away, we were allowed to say goodbye, not expecting to see him again. The reason they gave was that he had a revolver in the mill with him. He often worked nights when the winds came up and he was fearful for his life. But owning any kind of arms was forbidden. My mother and sister cried while we boys watched with frightened faces at what was happening to our father. But no one had power to change the course of events. After they had ransacked the house, we were lined up against a wall—my mother, sister Liese, and brothers Nick and Henry, and myself.

As I watched the soldier in front of me loading his rifle, a thought went through my mind. In a few minutes one of those bullets will go through me. Will it hurt? I was eight at the time. Now this may sound like a movie script, but at that moment a rider pulled up into the yard at full gallop and ordered the men inside to follow him. They forgot about us but took our father with them.

Mother said, "They will be back. They are not finished with us."

She had been saving some dried fruit for a treat, which was about the only food in the house. "Put on whatever clothes you can, stuff the fruit in your pockets, and let's get away from here."

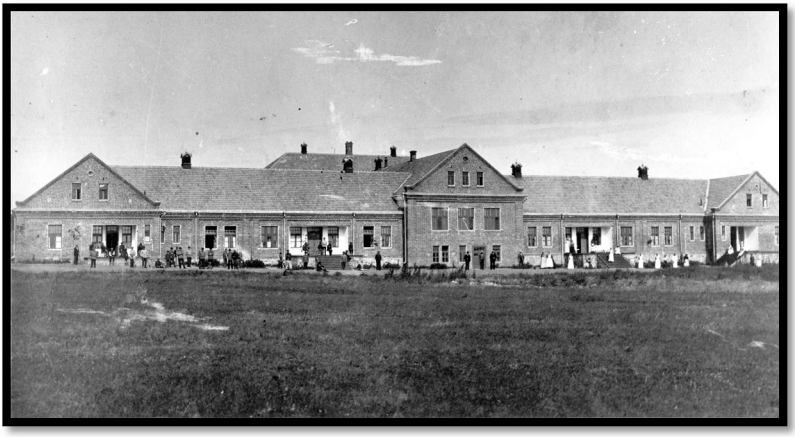
With Mother leading and her little brood trailing behind her, we took off. We didn't dare take the main road because the first patrol would send us back. We crossed fields, followed ravines, and stumbled through bushes. When we got tired we rested under a tree, always watching for a soldier. Eventually we arrived at Kronsthal, about six to eight miles away, where Mother's parents, Nick and Elizabeth Peters, lived. Since we were not wanted in that village, she figured we would be safe here. I admire my mother's courage for what she did that terrible night. My father's bravery was equal to hers.

A few days later, Father arrived at Kronsthal also, wet, dirty, tired, crying like a baby, but home. The soldiers had taken him two houses down the street and there, together with two other men, been lined up at the edge of the ravine behind the property. We Funk children used to play there among the bushes and trees at the bottom. A soldier aimed his rifle at him, but Dad said he could see the side of the rifle and knew it would miss. A bullet whistled past his head once, and then a second time. The soldier was toying with him. The third time the rifle was pointing directly at him, and he knew it was now or never. He threw himself backwards into the ravine and took off. At that moment the riders were sent to the Funk home to get the other soldiers to start a search party. By then Dad was long gone. He knew the territory better than they did.

He spent the night in the bushes and the next day worked his way stealthily to a point where he could see the house. He didn't know whether we were alive or dead inside but didn't dare investigate in case the soldiers were waiting for him inside. After watching all day without seeing any sign of life, he decided to try to make it to Kronsthal, hoping we had gotten away. By saving his life and daring to escape, he had also saved the lives of his family.

In October 1919, the situation in this area worsened as the White army pushed the Red forces toward Crimea—and with them, the anarchists. The entire area was in a state of upheaval, with heavy losses of human life, livestock, household goods, and furnishings. Food and clothing was in short supply. People whose clothes had been confiscated dressed in rags. Men didn't dare shave because then the bandits would immediately demand their razor, a valued weapon.

During the revolutionary years, Anna Janzen worked at Bethania Hospital for the mentally ill, an institution owned and controlled by the Mennonites. The kitchen staff was expected to feed about fifty men of the Red army every day. The officer in charge promised to keep his men in check. No girl would be molested. Each day as they walked in, he made sure their boots were clean. They ate quickly at the tables set for them and left promptly. He allowed no talking or joking with the girls, who darted in and out with platters of food as quickly as possible. To have the enemy on the premises every day was asking too much. Some young men hid their girlfriends in haystacks to keep them safe when they heard the revolutionaries were in the area.



Bethania Hospital for the mentally ill, located near the Dnieper River in the Chortitza Colony between the settlements of Einlage and Kronsweide.

The revolutionary bandits knew that at Bethania they would find large supplies of food, because the institution fed a large number of patients and staff. Once, earlier, they had broken into the stores and cleaned out all food supplies so that the staff had only jacket potatoes and sauerkraut to feed the patients for some time. Another time, they carried off all the male patients' clothing, except what they were wearing. They pitied no one, not even these mentally and emotionally weakened human beings.

Some orderlies had hidden supplies by burying them, but the bandit leader announced they would take the housefather, Jacob K. Janzen, hostage if they found anything buried, so that practice was stopped for a time. As Christmas approached, the kitchen girls wanted to hide sugar for Christmas cookies, but the housemother refused permission. At the next raid, the soldiers somehow missed seeing the sugar in their rush to get food, and it was available for Christmas baking.

One late fall day in 1919, as the tables were set for the usual Red soldiers, suddenly the rooms filled with White soldiers. The Dnieper River close by had frozen, something that usually didn't happen until after Christmas, and the White army had been able to cross the ice on foot. Hungry, they demanded food quickly. Anna had baked bread, and the soldiers grabbed pieces as fast as she sliced it, along with whatever food they saw standing ready. They filled their pockets with dried fruit and left, to be followed almost immediately by the revolutionaries asking for their meal. They, too, stayed only briefly. Instead of sitting down to eat, they poured the food into pails and carried it behind the sand ridge where they were camped.

Housefather Janzen watched the proceedings calmly, and, when both Reds and Whites were gone, commented dryly to his terrified staff, "Why didn't you invite the White soldiers to sit down?" Even years later in Canada, Anna was still furious with the housefather, her uncle, for being so nonchalant about an event that terrified her and other members of the staff, and could have cost them their lives.

On one occasion most of the Red soldiers who had spent the night in the outbuildings had left, but a few were still fast asleep so Anna, short in stature but brave in spirit, woke the late heavy sleepers to tell them their comrades had gone. They quickly got up and left, thanking her for waking them up. There is honor even among revolutionaries.

Gradually the Reds, assisted by the Makhnovists, defeated the White army and began pushing it into Crimea. Jake and Anna could proceed with their plans to marry. Love survived and even thrived in both good times and bad.

Kjielkje

During the difficult years of the Revolution housewives made kjielkje often, not just on wash day as was the custom in many homes. The simplest form of kjielkje was made of flour, salt, and water. A higher quality used eggs and milk instead of water when available. In good times, a gravy made of ham drippings, onions, and sour cream was poured over the homemade noodles. Leftovers were fried in butter until crisp. A popular Mennonite saying was, "If you don't eat kjielkje, you won't get muscles."

* * * * *

3 eggs, beaten
2¾ cups all-purpose flour
1½ tsp salt
1/3 cup milk.

Make a well of flour and salt in a bowl. Add slightly beaten eggs and enough milk to make a stiff dough that can be rolled out quite thin. Cut into 2 inch strips. Stack several strips with a sprinkling of flour between each layer. Cut into ¾ inch strips. Toss on a floured board to separate. Cook for about 10 minutes until tender.

* * * * *

My mother often made kjielkje and served it with onion gravy and sausage. Some cooks added them to any liquid, including hot milk or fruit soup, to make the dish more substantial. For some it was comfort food of the highest kind; for others, something to be avoided, especially the slippery kind (jlipskjielkje).

10

The Mennonite dance of death

By December 25, 1919, the Red army had defeated the White army and had driven them into Crimea, and by the end of that disturbing year, the Makhnovist army, weakened by disease, also moved out, realizing the Reds no longer needed their unacknowledged support. But their defeat was not due only to the military strength and prowess of their political enemies but to a small parasite: the common louse which spread epidemic diseases, particularly typhus, among people already nutritionally depleted.

These rough men, always on the move, far from sanitary facilities, were not able to keep themselves clean. They remained unwashed for days and weeks on end, smelly and full of lice. The lice didn't bother them much. Sometimes soldiers were seen to grab a handful of lice from the back of their necks and smash them to the floor. Getting rid of lice each evening was not a concern for these men. They also didn't care for their wounded properly. Instead, they set up hospitals for their sick in Mennonite schools and ordered the Mennonites to care for them, making this group of people the most likely to become infected.

While the Funk family was still living in Rosenthal, Jake was conscripted into service for this unpleasant task of caring for typhus-infected revolutionaries in the girls' school because he had already had the disease while in the Russian Red Cross. All school furniture had been removed and the floors in the classrooms covered with straw. Thirty men were bedded down in each classroom. Each man's greatcoat was laid over the straw (no sheets) and the sick man slept on it without blankets. The men were stripped to the waist in order to delouse at least the upper clothing. Lice crawled over the men by the hundreds.

The walking sick went outside to use the latrine; the others used two large pails placed at the far end of the hall. These sometimes overflowed faster than they could be emptied, so some bandits used the

hall floor to relieve themselves. Jake and another orderly were ordered to clean up the mess. But how, with limited equipment and supplies? It had all been stolen by the revolutionaries earlier in the year. No soap could be bought, even if they'd had the money. Clothing, especially extra changes of underwear and bed linens, was impossible to find. Little medicine or medical help was available. The few doctors available seldom visited the sick revolutionaries.

The two orderlies made themselves brooms with reeds and started sweeping toward the outside door. By the time they reached their destination, they had nothing left to sweep out—it had all been absorbed in the filthy floor. They looked at one another in dismay. What now? The floor was slippery and reeked. Outside stood wagons full of straw to be used as bedding. They scattered straw over the hall floor and considered their job done, smirking all the way home. The wagons that daily brought sick men left with almost the same number of dead ones. After a while, the bandits stopped disposing of their dead as the daily number increased rapidly, but left them where they fell, expecting someone else to bury their bodies.

A mass grave 77 feet long with 58 bodies in Tiege, Sagradowka Colony following a raid by bandits. Photograph in David M. Hofer, Die Hungersnot in Russland, und, Unsere Reise um die Welt *(K.M.B. Publishing, 1924), 54. Anna Janzen grew up in Friedensfeld, one of the 17 villages in the Sagradowka Colony.*

Soon the Mennonite and Russian villagers, also lacking soap and clean linens, were lice-infested and succumbed to disease. Housewives

tried burying lice-infected clothing, but it wasn't enough. Many people went over each seam of their clothing with a hammer to kill them. Sometimes the clothing was shaken over an open flame until the popping of the lice stopped. Still dozens were sick at one time. Many died. Those who got well and were strong enough nursed the sick. It was a terrible, discouraging time for everyone, with death so close in so many forms. Gerhard P. Schroeder in *Miracles of Grace and Judgment* reports that 85 to 90 percent of the people in the Rosenthal/Chortitza area were infected by typhus because they had housed large numbers of revolutionaries.[19] About 175–180 deaths were reported. The outlying areas had fewer incidences. Women who had been raped by the revolutionaries were beginning to see evidence of venereal disease.

Though the village of Rosenthal was becoming safer to live in, as some measure of peace and order had been restored, the Funk family couldn't return, for typhus had spread to Kronsthal as well and members of the extended Peters family were sick, too. Jake was again drawn into service. Christmas was celebrated in Kronsthal with few resources. People were sick and hungry and desperate, yet grateful that by New Year's of 1920, communication with other villages was slowly being re-established. Jake Funk and his red-headed bride, Anna Janzen, working at Bethania, also reconnected, but conditions were still too dangerous to travel freely, even a short eight miles. Jake liked to boast later on to us children how he had dodged cannon balls as he dashed through the thick of the battle zone to visit his beloved Anna.

On January 8, 1920, shortly after the New Year, my grandfather, Johann Funk, weakened by his imprisonment in November and suffering from stomach problems, died of typhus. He was the first to go—still quite young—only 52. Before he died he whispered to his brother-in-law Peter Peters that he had buried some money in the barnyard by the straw pile "third post from the corner." But everyone in the Peters household, crowded with refugees from Rosenthal, had too many other concerns to dig for buried money.

That same day, Johann's father-in-law, Klaas Nickolai Peters, weakened by famine also died of typhus. He was 73 years old. These two men and a younger man from the village were buried in one T-shaped grave three days later. These graves, with the crosspiece of the T at the bottom, were frequently used to avoid digging three separate graves as gravediggers were physically weak and unable to dig as quickly as necessary.

[19] Schroeder, *Miracles of Grace and Judgment*, 137–138.

Two days later, Johann's mother-in-law, Elizabeth Peters, also age 73, succumbed to the same disease. She was buried with a man and a woman in the same grave. Then Johann's brother-in-law, Peter Nick Peters, whispered the message he had received about the hidden money to Jake, his nephew, and died on January 21. He was only 30 years of age (see photograph on page 64). Four corpses lying on the front porch in two weeks, and Jake, my father, as the oldest male, had to be strong for everyone. No medical care, poor food, no outside spiritual resources to bring comfort in desperate times. For the rest of his life he carried the scars of those weeks as death stalked the weakened family.

Jake had to look after all arrangements—getting the bodies washed and prepared for burial, coffins built, graves dug, and funerals arranged at a time when there was no wood for coffins, few grave diggers, and no preachers well enough to conduct services. His usual venturesome spirit suffered as he washed the bodies in the traditional way and then placed them on boards in the summer room, where they often froze stiff.

At the first funeral, he asked a church elder to pray over the bodies before he filled in the grave, but the man wanted payment: half a load of cow manure for fuel, for he had sick in his own home and needed fuel. Jake had no manure to sell. Where could one get manure when the revolutionaries had taken all cows? So the deacon, a lesser dignitary, came instead. Jake was grateful.

When the next two family members died, he asked a relative to help transport the coffins to the graveyard on his wagon. The man still owned some half-starved horses. Jake had built simple coffins from slats ripped from the fence, for even lumber was unavailable. He had given another man a pail of grain to dig the grave. But the man with the horses said, "I'm too busy." Maybe he was. But the bodies had to be buried.

He placed them on a homemade wagon built with the wheels of an old plow. His younger brothers helped pull the crude wagon to the graveyard, all fearful at each slow step of the journey that someone might have buried another body in the grave before they got there. At the graveside, they lowered the coffins into the waiting hole and Jake removed his cap and recited Psalm 73:25–26, more for himself and those left behind than for the dead. "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Then he filled in the hole with its allotment of three bodies, and returned to the land of the living dead. Life was still very precarious.

Decades later, after he had told the story to us children, he commented abruptly, "We shouldn't have talked about it." He felt

compelled to tell others about the event, but the hurt was too great to dig around in often without opening festering wounds related to the inhumanity of humankind to those who suffered alone. He felt the rejection of the educated rich, usually the powerful church leaders, to his cry for help only because he was the uneducated son of *anwohner* Johann Funk. To take with him into the waiting night the memory of how four family members had died within two weeks and how he had had to be undertaker, minister, mourner, and comforter for each one was a new test each time he talked about it. That, and the memory of the weeping coming from his mother's bedroom as she faced a dark uncertain future in a politically unstable world with neither her husband, the family wage-earner, nor her parents and brother. Four immediate family members gone in two weeks. The loss was too great to bear.

In 1989, I visited that gravesite on a visit to Ukraine and stood long, wondering which of these untended gravesites among the weeds and brush belonged to my distant relatives and probing the depth of suffering my father and his family went through at the time. As I recalled my father's pain, I struggled to understand what it had done to him.

The vacant Funk house in Rosenthal was an open invitation for the anarchists to move in and make themselves at home. Jake walked from Kronsthal to the house by the mill to check on it. He looked in the kitchen window. Cupboards stood open, drawers were empty, and all household goods of any value were gone. Chests had been smashed open and broken dishes and chairs were strewn over the floor usually kept immaculate by his mother. Feathers from bedding formed a layer over everything, including the straw the bandits had been using to sleep on. He could see they had used the corners of the house as a latrine. Dirt and dust clung to everything. The livestock had disappeared. Only a few stray chickens scratched the dirt. He quickly left.

He returned a second time. The house looked deserted so he walked into the open door thinking the bandits had left it for a better place. While he was pushing the debris around in the kitchen, looking for items of value, several bandits returned, sabers swinging, gleeful they had found someone to push around.

With a saber poking his ribs, he was urged to quickly tell them where he had hidden valuables. Many of the Mennonites had buried money, clothing, dishes, and keepsakes in hope of saving them for a better day.

"I knew they had cruel ways of making people talk," he told me years later. "I didn't think the punishment was worth what I was trying to save, so I led them to the garden where I had buried a fur coat and some boots I had brought back from the army under some corncobs."

He planned to use them after conditions became calmer. He was tired of wearing *schlorre*. But those wonderful leather boots had to be given up if he wanted to live.

The soldiers made him dig up what he had buried and carry it into the house for them. Then a dark-haired man with a heavy moustache, dressed in a gaudy shirt and pants and wearing highly-polished boots, decided he wanted the fur coat. A feisty little fellow with a fur cap cocked over his head and sabers and pistol dangling from his belt thought it should be his, for it matched his headpiece. They argued and then fought, shoving each other around among the debris while Jake headed for the back door, jumped the ravine, and dashed off. One bandit fired as he fled, but missed. He didn't go back to Rosenthal for a long time, not until he was sure the village was relatively free of looters, murderers, bandits, and thieves.

When the new Bolshevik regime finally gained control of Ukraine—after putting down the White army's resistance two years after the Revolution took hold in St. Petersburg in 1917—they helped with the burial of dead Makhnovists and livestock and general cleanup. Change was in the air. Food in Rosenthal/Chortitza was still scarce, but help came from the Molotschna sister colony, which had not been ravaged as severely by the revolutionaries. These Mennonites transported large amounts of food, clothing, medical supplies, and personnel to Chortitza and its environs to help the thousands of people in dire need. Hundreds of orphans were taken to Molotschna to be placed in foster homes. Hope rose in troubled hearts that life could begin again.

In February 1920, Anna Janzen managed to come from Bethania Hospital to visit Jake in Kronsthal, where the family was still living with relatives, to discuss wedding plans. She was shocked to find that she, Jake, and his sister would have to share one room in the over-crowded house, sleeping on separate cots. Her feminine modesty rebelled against this arrangement. What would her friends think of her sleeping in the same room as her fiancé before marriage? But there was no other place to sleep.

Late one night Jake went out to dig for the money his father, Johann, had said he had buried in the farm yard, "third fence post from the corner." But which corner? In the dark of night Jake and his brothers kept digging around one post after another without success. Finally, near a post nowhere near a corner they found a jar of Tsarist money, useless in the new Bolshevik regime with its new currency. All their efforts had been in vain.

Anna returned to Bethania for a short while before the wedding and to say goodbye to close friendships forged during her five years there. One of these friends was a volunteer worker, called home because her mother was sick. What should she do, she asked Anna. "Go home," Anna told her, "and serve the Lord there"—her philosophy throughout her life. Duty to family always came first. Before Tina left, she came to the kitchen where Anna was emptying the large ovens of their freshly baked loaves of bread, face flushed by the heat of the large stove. "Anna," she said as she kissed her friend goodbye, "I hope your old age will be peaceful and pleasant."

Years later, when Anna and Jake were living in their retirement homes in Clearbrook, British Columbia, and Edmonton, Alberta, she still cherished those words like the rainbow of God's promise to Noah. She had carried them with her in the difficult beginning years in Canada and during the Depression when the *Reiseschuld* (travel debt) had to be paid despite money being as scarce as it had been in Russia. A pleasant old age. Her friend had wished it for her. She found comfort in that wish.

On March 4, 1920, Susanna Funk and her children finally returned to Rosenthal from Kronsthal where they had found refuge during Johann's imprisonment. They were ready to start anew. They began cleaning up the mess left by the revolutionaries, digging into corners and crannies to erase traces of the filth the renegades had left behind. Father Johann was no longer with them. Susanna and her sons planned to continue running the windmill, although there was little grain to grind. She had no other option.

On March 31, 1920, Jake Funk and Anna Janzen were married in the Evangelical Mennonite *Allianz* Church by her uncle, Jacob K. Janzen, housefather at Bethania and *Allianz* minister. The marriage text was Romans 12:12, "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer." Nature provided a beautifully clear day, as if to remove the memory of the horrors of the winter.

Because the economy was still unsettled, Anna couldn't buy the wedding outfit she had dreamed about as a girl. Yet she was determined to be married in a special outfit, not just her old everyday dress. She remade the skirt of an old white voile dress, added a white blouse, borrowed a veil from sister-in-law Susanna, and placed a wreath of myrtle leaves on her head. Her wedding attire was complete. Jake wore brother John's wedding suit. In front of a small congregation, they promised to love each other until death would part them. Sixty-six years later, it parted them when Jake died at age 91. They had exchanged rings earlier at their

engagement celebration. Their only gifts were a half-dozen small bowls that had somehow escaped the rampages of the revolutionaries.

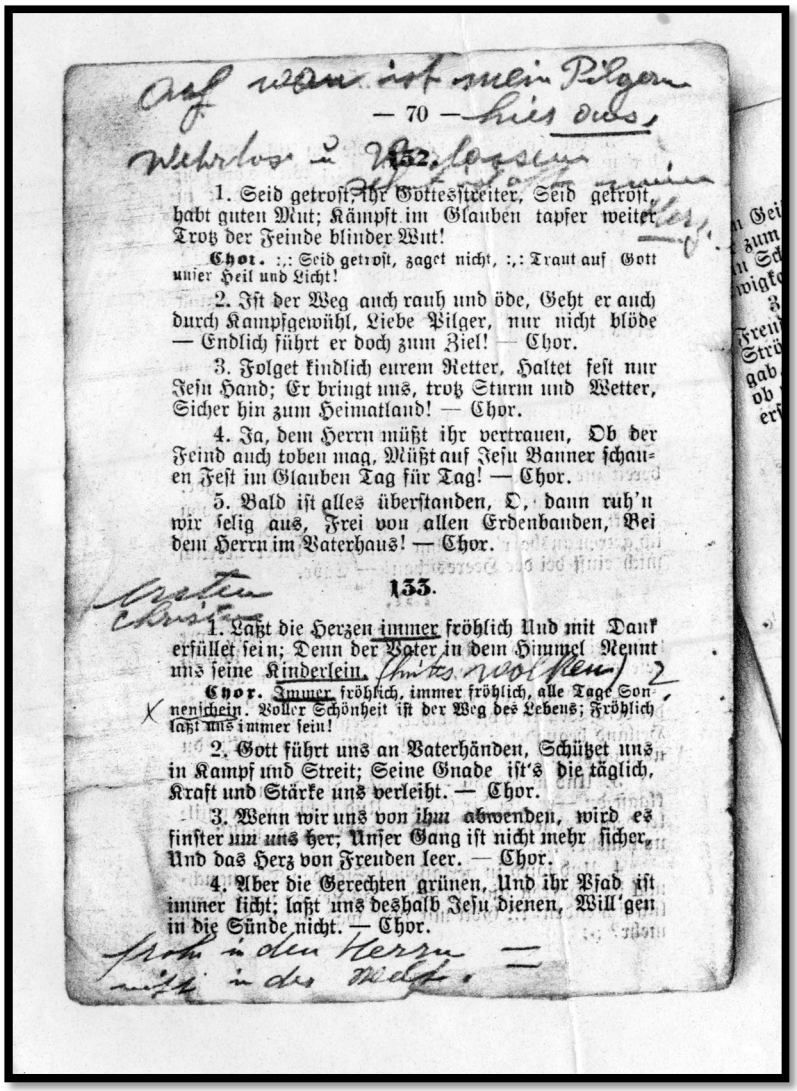
The wedding feast took additional ingenuity to seem festive. Food was still in short supply. A Seventh Day Adventist man had sold Jake some cabbage that he had buried to keep the bandits from finding it. Anna cooked some meatless *borscht* next door at Mrs. Penner's, who stayed home from the wedding ceremony to keep it warm.

When the guests—all twelve of them—returned from church to eat the wedding meal at the Penner's place, to her disappointment, despite all her careful arrangements, the soup was cold—not piping hot as she had planned. She called one of the serving girls from the kitchen and told her to take the *borscht* back and reheat it. The guests would wait. Decades later, when she was in her nineties, I remember eating in a restaurant with her. She had ordered soup, but it arrived cold. She couldn't eat it and didn't have the nerve to send it back to the kitchen as she had done on her wedding day. But that was a different Anna then, ready for whatever faced her. Soup should be eaten hot, not cold.

They moved into the *sommastow* with his widowed mother so that Jake could continue helping with the mill. The death of Father Johann a few months before was still a raw wound for all. Peter, the next oldest son, was still in the White army.

Anna's parents did not attend the wedding. They didn't even know about it. All Anna knew was that when the German occupation army had crossed the border into Russia, her parents and siblings still living at home in Garletzky had fled the *khutor* (estate) near the Black Sea at the mouth of the Dnieper River where her father had been working. Rumors abounded that in the conflict, the estate had been razed and all workers had been killed or had fled. No one knew where. A rich estate like this one, with its many buildings, equipment, livestock, and hundreds of workers was a prime target of the anarchists. It had been her first main place of employment before going to Bethania. In summer it employed almost a small village—up to two hundred laborers and household helpers and fifty shepherds.

Her father had once told her, "Anna, as long as I have a piece of bread, you have a piece of bread." Did he now have a piece of bread, even a small one, for himself and the rest of the family? Everyone—Mother, Father, Lena, Franz, Neta, Truda, Mariechen, Kornelius, Martha—had disappeared into the vast unknown after the revolutionary forces swept through the area near the Black Sea where they had been living.



— 70 —

1. Seid getrost, ihr Gottesstreiter, Seid getrost, habt guten Mut; Kämpft im Glauben tapfer weiter Trotz der Feinde blinder Wut!

Chor. :,: Seid getrost, zaget nicht, :,: Traut auf Gott unser Heil und Licht!

2. Ist der Weg auch rauh und öde, Geht er auch durch Kampfgewühl, Liebe Pilger, nur nicht blöde — Endlich führt er doch zum Ziel! — Chor.

3. Folget kindlich eurem Retter, Haltet fest nur Jesu Hand; Er bringt uns, trotz Sturm und Wetter, Sicher hin zum Heimatland! — Chor.

4. Ja, dem Herrn müßt ihr vertrauen, Ob der Feind auch toben mag, Müßt auf Jesu Banner schauen Fest im Glauben Tag für Tag! — Chor.

5. Bald ist alles überstanden, O, dann ruh'n wir selig aus, Frei von allen Erdenbanden, Bei dem Herrn im Vaterhaus! — Chor.

133.

1. Laßt die Herzen immer fröhlich Und mit Dank erfüllet sein; Denn der Vater in dem Himmel Nennt uns seine Kinderlein.

Chor. Immer fröhlich, immer fröhlich, alle Tage Sonnenschein. Voller Schönheit ist der Weg des Lebens; Fröhlich laßt uns immer sein!

2. Gott führt uns an Vaterhänden, Schützet uns in Kampf und Streit; Seine Gnade ist's die täglich, Kraft und Stärke uns verleiht. — Chor.

3. Wenn wir uns von ihm abwenden, wird es finster um uns her; Unser Gang ist nicht mehr sicher, Und das Herz von Freuden leer. — Chor.

4. Aber die Gerechten grünen, Und ihr Pfad ist immer licht; laßt uns deshalb Jesu dienen, Will'gen in die Sünde nicht. — Chor.

A page from Jake Funk's hymnbook that he smuggled into prison in his boot during the Revolution. These hymns of faith were of great encouragement as he waited to be shot.

Anna only knew that when the Red army had crossed into the area, her parents and children still living at home had fled to save their lives. When she had told Jake this story while working at Bethania, he had promised to look for them when times got better, if they didn't show up

before then. She had had no mail from them since 1917. This was now 1920. Alone, she could do nothing.

It didn't take long for the Mennonite Brethren leaders to learn that Jake, their member, had broken a key rule—marriage outside the church and fellowship around the Lord's table with unbaptized believers—strictly meaning those who had only been sprinkled, not immersed. The problem was that the *Allianz* church accepted into membership believers who had been baptized by sprinkling, even though their practice was to baptize by immersion; but Mennonite Brethren, in their zeal to be biblical, were certain the most faithful biblical teaching was immersion. Jake had left one Mennonite church, the *Kirchliche* or traditional church, to join another, the Mennonite Brethren, only to be ousted from that one because he ignorantly thought it was equal or similar to the church his new wife belonged to.

In April 1920, some Mennonite Brethren leaders walked up the hill to the house by the windmill to tell Jake he had been excommunicated from the Mennonite Brethren church for marrying Anna. They began attending the *Allianz* church where she was a baptized member. In his memoirs, Gerhard Schroeder comments that the Mennonite Brethren at Rosenthal/Chortitza, led by fiercely persistent defenders of the truth, were in his opinion "more concerned about keeping certain biblical forms, but had lost the real zeal to be in the center of the will of Christ and win souls for Christ."[20]

Anna had been baptized at the traditional age of 18 in the *Kirchliche* church. While at Bethania, she felt the need for a clearer commitment to Christ. The Spirit was working in her heart. One roommate was a believer, the other an unbeliever. They argued their positions, each convinced their position was best.

One day when Bethania's houseparents Jacob K. and Martha Janzen's two-year-old daughter Martha died unexpectedly, she knew she had to do something. If children died without warning, she might also, and she wasn't ready to meet her Maker in the hereafter. In the quietness of her room after work one day, she decided her life should belong to Jesus Christ. She never doubted her salvation again. She was rebaptized by immersion on June 12, 1916, in the *Allianz* church at Orloff upon her confession of faith. The *Allianz* were just as vigorously evangelical and pietistic as the MBs, but they did not care as much about denominational distinctives.

[20] Schroeder, *Miracles of Grace and Judgment*, 156.

Jake couldn't say he was sorry he had married Anna, whom he loved and who was a born-again believer, so he accepted the ultimatum of the MBs to get out—but this arguing over church fences continued to bother him for the rest of his life. "Such a rule is a joke," he told me years later.

Jake and Anna formed a close association with the *Allianz* church, where he was often called upon to preach. Prayer meetings continued despite imprisonments and general unrest. Services were held in a former bookstore, and leaders and preachers for this Rosenthal Evangelical Mennonite *Allianz* Church were chosen from the membership. On Pentecost, May 17, at the three-day festival, Jake helped with the preaching. Within him was a growing hunger for spiritual truth not satisfied by the well-regulated ways in the established Mennonite church, with its centuries of firmly entrenched methods and beliefs, each building on the one before and keeping the church staid and stolid, but without the vitality found in the evangelical congregations such as the Mennonite Brethren and *Allianz* churches.

Prachafat

When no meat was available, my mother made prachafat (beggar's gravy), which we children enjoyed possibly more than gravy made with roast beef drippings.

* * * * *

Sauté one sliced onion in 3 tbsp fat. Stir in 2–3 tbsp flour and mix well. Gradually add water in which potatoes have been boiled, stirring constantly. When thickened and smooth, add ½ cup sour cream, or milk if no cream is available. Season with salt and pepper.

11

"Is my daughter still alive?"

In the spring of 1920, once again the villagers had little seed for planting their crops, yet they worked the ground as best they could, planting melons, potatoes, and other vegetables, in addition to field crops. They rejoiced: After the difficult winter, spring brought hope for better things. The blooming acacia and fruit trees were encouraging signs. In fall, perhaps the high school and the teacher training school could be reopened—yet all these thoughts were tempered by the growing evidence of collectivization and Russification. The country was changing rapidly, with new ways to regulate their lives introduced almost every day. Daily life was no longer like it had been even a decade earlier. The Mennonites no longer felt safe and at home in the country that had invited them about 130 years earlier. The whole land seemed to be sneering at them for their former prosperity and present poverty.

On May 17, 1920, the Mennonite communities celebrated Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit to the church, with a three-day observance as in the olden days. A small sign of normalcy.

On June 1, 1920, at the age of nearly 24, Jake Funk was elected as deacon and evangelist in the small but growing *Allianz* congregation he and Anna now attended. Abram Klassen was chosen as leading pastor and Peter Klassen and Gerhard P. Schroeder (uncle of Henry Schroeder, who later married Jake's daughter Frieda) as preachers. They named the church the Rosenthal Evangelical Mennonite *Allianz* Church. They held two prayer meetings each week, while the other church in the village had none at this time. This small *Allianz* group sensed a growing hunger for spiritual life to lift the suffering people from the darkness of the previous years.

The members saw great promise in Jake's energetic style of preaching. He thought he had found his calling, for he enjoyed getting up in front of a congregation and telling others how he had found peace

in Christ. His close friend during this time was another newly chosen minister, the above-mentioned Gerhard P. Schroeder. Together, they walked long distances to preach and minister. Jake called him his David. He was Gerhard's Jonathan, he wrote me years later, referring to the close friendship between the Old Testament characters. The memory of those times, when the two of them met real spiritual needs among the physically, emotionally, and economically downtrodden, was still inspiring to Jake as an old man. There had been a time when his life had been full, rich, almost heady in its opportunities for spiritual growth and service. And he had felt needed.

In *Miracles of Grace and Judgment,* Schroeder's remarkable memoir of the difficult days during the Revolution*,* he writes that he and the young deacon Jacob Funk walked to Schoenwiese, a distance of about 60 miles, where they held several meetings with Lutheran believers in their homes.[21] As soon as they were outside the village limits, they took off their homemade sandals and walked barefoot the rest of the way. Few people had shoes or boots, for the revolutionaries had taken them. The men held services in Rosenthal, Chortitza, Schoenberg, Hochfeld, and other places. They sensed an interest in and hunger for spiritual matters. On the other hand, food for the physical body was in extremely short supply, including salt. Inflation had risen to astronomical figures.

In the fall of 1920, the Chortitza *Zentralschule* and the teacher training school reopened, bringing a measure of order to children's lives. But collectivization of property and Russification had begun in earnest. There was still some fighting between Bolshevists and anarchists in isolated areas. The Funk family settled into a routine, with the new bride Anna helping her mother-in-law Susanna with the usual fall household tasks. A large watermelon crop meant lots of syrup to cook for the winter to use as a sweetener.

The new regime encroached severely on the Mennonite villagers' freedom. Permits were needed to travel, to move to another residence, to make large purchases. A person was always standing in line for this or that permit. Church and state were being torn apart in the colonies, where during the previous century and a half, the two had been combined, often in one person, such as the church elder. Church leaders could no longer also serve as teachers of the young, lest they indoctrinate them.

One morning in November 1920, before Anna was about to go down to the cellar for potatoes for the noon meal, she moved toward the

[21] Schroeder, *Miracles of Grace and Judgment*, 232.

door to lock it to keep out strangers while she was below, sorting good potatoes from the rotten. Her mother-in-law, Susanna Funk, was next door helping with the fall pig butchering ritual. As she was about to bolt the door, she saw a young man in army fatigues striding down the lane. She sensed something familiar about the way he walked. He kept looking anxiously at the house as he strode towards it. She stood by the window, wondering what to do. The young man walked resolutely down the stone-lined path toward the door, lifted the latch, and walked in.

"This must be Peter," she said to herself, as he greeted her. She had never met Jake's brother. Peter had been gone at the time of the wedding. Peter had been in the White army. Now Peter was home.

She ran next door to get Susanna who was deep into the morning's work, cleaning sausage casings. "Mama, Peter is home!" The words electrified everyone, for some neighbors never expected to see him again. Quickly, Susanna washed her hands and rushed home to greet her son—tired, dirty, full of lice, but still smiling. Yes, Peter was home. The family rejoiced.

Peter's problems were not over with yet. Within the month, he was arrested by the new regime and thrust into jail. Before he left, his mother slipped a Testament into his knapsack, for she knew he wasn't a believer, and prison life would be trying.

Once again the waiting and praying for his release began. During the Revolution, Jake had done a favor for a Jewish friend, member of the Red party, by informing him that the White army was moving into the village. "Hide," he had told his friend, "or the Whites will get you."

"Jake," said his Jewish friend, "I'll remember you some day," and left the area until the Whites were thoroughly routed to Crimea. The Jews, bitter because of the White pogroms and confiscation of their lands, had joined the Bolshevists.

Now that the Reds had imprisoned his brother, Jake decided to find out if his credit with his friend was still good, and asked him one night for Peter's release, for no doubt he would be shot for volunteering for the White Tsarist army. The Jewish friend recalled his promise, and engineered circumstances so that Peter was released.

While in prison, Peter faced his own possible end. He later wrote: *The Red army was in control in the area. I was questioned and imprisoned because I had been in the White army. I shared a small cell with two other prisoners. Close by, other prisoners were executed. I had to consider that might be my end also. I examined my life. I recalled Bible verses my mother had taught me. I found forgiveness of sins and peace with God. Through a miracle I was released and determined to live for*

Christ thereafter. I returned home and sought the fellowship of believers. Peter later in life became an ordained minister.

"We thought it was an answer to our prayers," said Susanna. That morning they had prayed once again for Peter's quick release, and before morning was over he stood at the door, smiling his usual quiet smile, and ready to tell them that in prison he had read the New Testament Susanna had stuck into his bag. When the guards called his name, he had been convinced his time had come, but he was ready. He had placed his trust in Christ. Instead, the guard said, "Funk, take your belongings and get out." Together the family thanked God for bringing him home a second time.

Now Jake could start looking for Anna's lost parents. But the middle of November was no time to wander to unknown parts of the country. Christmas would soon be upon them. Their first child was due in February. Jake decided to wait. Christmas 1920 was celebrated only in churches and homes, not in schools, now controlled by the Bolshevists.

On December 19, Jake was ordained as deacon and evangelist in the Mennonite *Allianz* Church together with other leaders. He and Anna were straddling two denominations: the Chortitza Mennonite Church and also the *Allianz,* with a small part of themselves still connected to the Mennonite Brethren Church, a pattern that would continue in Canada.

In the spring of 1921, Jake knew it was time to make good on his promise to his new wife to look for her family, lost somewhere during the Revolution.[22] Conditions had settled somewhat, without daily reports of death by typhus or violence. One day in early June, he knew it was time to begin the search—or at least to learn if the family was still alive. He had waited long enough. It had been a promise. His brother Peter would look after the mill in his absence. He pulled on an old pair of pants over his slightly better worn-out pants, donned a Russian-style blouse that hung loose, slipped into his *schlorre*, and put some bread into a knapsack. Anna added a picture of herself to give to her parents. He had no money. Who had money then?

Before he left the village of Rosenthal he went to the local government office, now controlled by the Reds, where his Jewish friend worked. He asked for a travel permit to move about freely in the Kherson district, where he planned to begin the search. His friend gave him the documents he needed, and Jake pinned the papers into his pants pocket

[22] I also tell this story in Katie Funk Wiebe, *The Storekeeper's Daughter: A Memoir* (Herald Press, 1997), 56–77.

and started walking south, first to Kronsthal, where he had buried his father and the others more than a year ago.

Many graves had been added since January 1920, so he spent a few minutes looking for the graves with the small wooden stakes and familiar names. Like other graves in which several people had been buried, these had collapsed, making the graveyard look like a giant face deeply pitted by smallpox. He looked for something to shovel additional soil onto the sunken graves, but found nothing. After scraping a bit with a broken tree branch, he gave up and tramped on. His inner wounds connected with this graveyard would have to wait for healing for a better time. He had important work to do.

By early afternoon, he reached the bend in the Dnieper River where small ocean-going ships came inland to take on cargo, and where, once again, the local police were checking travel documents. The commissar, whose duty it was to examine each document and stamp it, was called out of the office as Jake reached his desk, so the man said to his clerk, "Look after this man." She, thinking her overseer had checked the papers, stamped them without examining them and sent him out. He left without saying a word, grateful for small mercies. At the dock he found a boat willing to take him on board in exchange for work as it navigated down the Dnieper to Kherson.

Anna had given him some general directions about where to look for her parents, for she had often made this trip to the Garletzky estate while working at Bethania. It had been near the point of land that jutted into the Black Sea, so Jake's first stop was Kherson, a large city of about sixty to seventy thousand people on the river's right bank, about 15 miles before the river opens into the Black Sea. He spent the first night with a Jewish student he had met on the boat and who had invited him to his home. Before he left, the young man's mother gave him bread for the day's journey.

The next part of the journey wasn't quite as simple. After a morning's walking, he stopped near an inn at Holoprystan, a place where Anna had often stopped while traveling to her parents' home for a vacation. The owner, a short dark Russian with a heavy beard, noticed this stranger sitting outside under the tree eating his dry bread. "Where are you going?"

"Garletzky," replied Jake. He said he was looking for some people who had lived there before the Revolution.

"All gone—no one there anymore. Who're you looking for?"

"Franz Janzen."

"Franz Janzen?" The man stopped to think. "Red hair, German-speaking?"

Jake nodded.

"I know him—he's been here. But don't go to the *khutor*. Nothing there—everything's gone—even the fences. When the Makhnovists came through they burned everything—houses, barns, sheds—everything. Hard times."

"But the workers—where did they go?"

The innkeeper looked at Jake carefully and said nothing for a while. "You might try some of the villages on the other side of the *khutor*. Terrible times on the *khutor*…terrible all over." His face looked pained.

Jake asked for a drink of water from the well. As he walked away from the inn towards the road, the Russian called out, "Here, take some bread. You'll need it." With thanks, Jake put the dark rye bread into his knapsack and stepped into the afternoon sun to head in the direction the man had suggested. He felt troubled. The man had not been hopeful he would find anyone.

Everywhere he looked, he saw signs of extreme poverty and hardship. Houses had collapsed and fields lay idle. Tumbleweed, already dried out, piled up against the fences. He knew no one. No one knew him. He could be killed within the next five minutes by someone who wanted the crust in his knapsack. What was more, when he returned to Rosenthal, it was only to pick up the struggle. Then he too wept and prayed. Once I asked him what he felt like on that long, lonely journey. He turned to me, startled by my question, and said: "Scared…scared."

His stomach told him it was time to eat that crust, and he thought of the way it used to be before the Revolution—attics filled with rows of dried apples, corn, beans, peas, and blackberries. Between the windows of the house hung strings threaded with red peppers and onions. Big barrels of watermelons, cucumbers, and sauerkraut stood ready for winter use in the cellar. There, too, was the barrel of *kwass*, which every Mennonite family found refreshing on a hot day like this. On the table would have been fried potatoes, ham, *pluememooss*, fresh bread, and coffee. He pulled out his piece of dry rye bread and munched it slowly. After some more walking, he spent the night by a haystack, his knapsack for a pillow.

He slept until morning, when the cool breezes blowing over him off the Black Sea woke him. He heard dogs barking in the distance, and a cock crowing. A thrush sang boldly in the trees. It was time to move on. He shook the straw from his pants, ate the last bit of bread in his sack and began the walk along the shore of the Black Sea toward the

point. Today, he had to find the Janzens—or some trace of them. He trudged along, mile after mile, and never met anyone who looked even slightly familiar.

In three small villages strung out one after another along the main road, he asked shopkeepers if they knew any Janzens—a red-haired man with a thin, dark-haired, pock-faced and raspy-voiced wife and many children living in the area. Heads shook each time. He trudged on. Toward the point the farmyards looked even more neglected. No gardens, rickety fences, a pig, a few chickens scratched the barren ground. Little houses with thatched roofs crouched low beneath the few remaining church domes. He saw uncared-for graveyards. He wanted desperately to return to Anna waiting for him in the house by the mill to assume his responsibilities as husband and father. Why had he consented to come on this impossible mission? Was this his responsibility as a son-in-law? Where were Anna's older brothers?

Towards evening, as the sun was setting, he came to the village of Proghnow, which looked no different from any of the other villages he had passed with its rows of simple *simlin* (sod houses), struggling flowerbeds in fenced-in-yards. Whom could he ask about the Janzens this time? No inn, nothing that looked like a store or public place. He was about to knock on the nearest door, when he saw a young girl of about 10 or 11 years with red braids flying, dart between two buildings at the far end of the street. Something clicked. Red hair like his Anna's! He ran, calling out in Low German, "Is your name Janzen?"

The girl paused momentarily, looked at him, then abruptly turned and fled as if she had seen a ghost. Jake followed after her until he was standing at the door of a broken-down *simlin* into which she had disappeared. Part of the roof was gone, and the mud walls were melting into the ground from the rains. He knocked gently. A tired, dark-haired woman, thin, with pock marks on her face, opened it cautiously.

"Are you the Franz Janzens?"

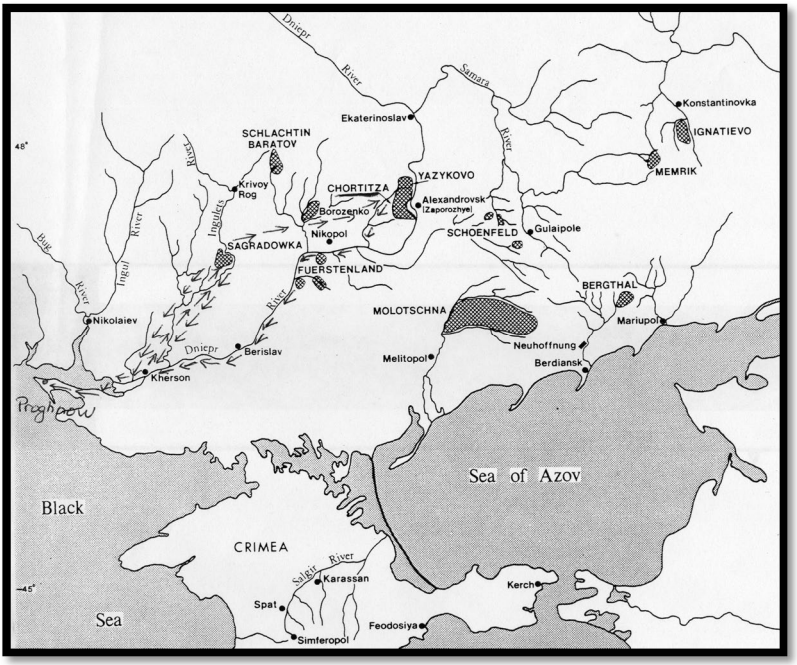
The woman looked at him. Jake knew that by now he probably looked like any Russian peasant, unshaven, rumpled, yet he hoped his words might get the response he was looking for. She waited a moment, looked at him again, as if trying to recognize him, then said, "Yes." But the word was a question.

"I am looking for the Franz Janzens who used to live at Trubetskoye many years ago. I am the husband of your daughter Anna." He unpinned his pocket to produce the picture of his wife. The red-haired girl he had seen on the street stood behind her mother watching. Some other young girls dressed in coarse gunny sacks with holes cut in

them for armholes moved closer to the door. Straw lay on the floor for bedding. He saw little furniture.

The woman spoke, her voice low and scratchy. "Truda came home saying a man had talked to her in the language we speak." She took the envelope, opened it and looked long and hard at the picture, then turned to Jake, disbelief written in every line of her face. "Is my daughter still alive?" she cried out. Katharina Janzen's tears flowed.

In a short while her husband walked in, having finished his work for the day in a nearby mill. Once again Jake explained who he was, where he had come from, and why. His wife, their daughter Anna, was concerned about them. He had come on her behalf. After a while, their son Franz, about 15, came home and Jake repeated the same words.



Route taken by Jacob Funk during his month-long search for Anna's family. Map of Mennonite colonies in South Russia by William Schroeder (scale: 1 inch = 50 miles).

Like the brothers of Joseph, they couldn't hear enough. Anna was alive. Anna wanted them to come back. Anna, the short one with red hair, the determined one who knew her mind, who brought them presents when she visited. Anna was thinking of them. She had sent her husband, this strong, self-assured young man to help them, to rescue them.

After some time, the mother sent a child next door with a pail of dried manure to get some fire. Supper, even if meager, had to be cooked for their guest. They ate a simple supper of gruel and hard bread. The mother apologized for the food, but it was all they had.

Jake looked around. Seven children and two adults were living in this small shack on the meager earnings of Franz senior and Franz junior, but it wasn't enough to keep them fed. They had managed to save one cow from the *khutor*. When the bandits rushed into their home, they had lined the family up against the wall, even the youngest. A sudden scuffle had knocked the gun out of one ruffian's hand and blown out the lamp. The family had fled into the darkness. The buildings had all been razed. They had been here now in this hovel for two years, and each week conditions grew worse.

"You can't stay here," Jake told them. They knew that. "You'll die of starvation."

Father Janzen agreed. Starvation or exposure would take them this winter, but he didn't have the resources, financial or emotional, to get the family away from this hidden spot back to the Mennonite settlements in the north. The little money he earned was never enough for food, let alone travel permits and costs.

They talked a long time that night before each one found a spot on the straw, which did little to soften the hardness of the dirt floor. The injustice of this family's suffering compelled Jake to help. By morning he knew what he had to do. He had slept little that night. He couldn't leave the Janzen family here at Proghnow. He had found them, but finding them wasn't enough. They had to be helped out of their situation, and apparently, there was no one to do it but himself.

He decided to return to the Mennonite district of Sagradowka, where the Janzens had lived originally and where relatives lived. Maybe someone there would take the family in until they were able to support themselves. To leave the family in Proghnow meant surrendering them to a slow and painful death by starvation and disease, if the damp harshness of the winter alongside the seashore didn't hasten it.

Once again, Jake pulled the old pants over his slightly better ones, took as little food as possible from the family's small supply, and walked back the way he had come. On this trip, the wind, sand, and runaway thistles were at his back. Young Franz walked with him to keep him company as far as Holoprystan, where he had met the innkeeper. There he sent a postcard to Anna in Rosenthal, hoping it would reach her.

Next he found a way back to Kherson and headed north toward the village of Friedensfeld in the Sagradowka district. Day merged with day

as he trudged alone the long distance, some 50–60 miles. He lost all track of time. Yet he couldn't let either weariness or his longing to return to the house by the mill stop him or change his direction. Toward evening, after passing through several small Mennonite villages, each with its row of almost-identical houses on each side of the tree-lined street, Jake came to Friedensfeld. Though it had been Anna's home territory, it was all strange to him.

He stopped at the first household and asked the men sitting outside the house on the bench in the evening air where relatives of Franz Janzen might be living. The men stared at him in his dusty clothes and worn *schlorre*. They probed why he had come, then directed him to a house down the street where Anna's older brother John lived. That brother had been working as a night watchman on the same estate as the elder Franz Janzen. When Jake located him, he acknowledged that he feared to return to the area where he had worked because he had made enemies of pilfering Russians on the estate. He, too, had been concerned about what had happened to his parents and siblings—but had done nothing.

From there, Jake and his newly-found brother-in-law went to an uncle, who had long ago reconciled himself to the thought that the whole Franz Janzen family had perished. He rejoiced to hear they were alive. He agreed to help, but didn't feel he could go to Proghnow and bring the family to Friedensfeld. That evening, for the first time in about two weeks, Jake slept under a traditional feather comforter and dreamed nothing. But as soon as he awoke, his mind shifted to the family cowering in the mud hut pounded by the strong Black Sea winds. Mirrored in their faces he saw the waiting face of Anna, his wife. He prayed for strength to return to Proghnow. The task was not yet finished.

After a night's rest, Jake was on the road again, bread in his knapsack. Kherson was once again his destination. His *schlorre* slapped a pattern into the dusty road until he reached the port city. There a fisherman who had known the Janzens agreed to ship him aboard his sailboat across the inlet in exchange for work.

"I thought I knew something about the wind because I had operated the mill for my father, but sailing on that boat was a new experience," Jake told us children decades later. The ship was not going with, but against, wind. The captain was using wind in a way Jake knew nothing about. The two men had a good time discussing the ways of the wind.

At the other shore, a farmer transporting a load of hay was glad for company and invited Jake to go along. He hopped on readily to avoid the long walk to Proghnow. When Jake knocked at the door of the mud

hut the second time, the Janzen family was overjoyed to see him. Only smiles. No apprehension. They had been waiting every day for him to return with news of relatives they had not seen or heard from in several years. He told them the plan—to return to Friedensfeld to live with relatives temporarily.

"How are we going to get there?"

Jake didn't know. Not yet. Travel alone hadn't been easy but possible. To travel with two adults and seven children in addition to himself seemed impossible. He had no money. They had no money. The only saleable item was the cow, a half-starved creature whose ribs poked through scabby skin. She carried the gaunt look of certain doom. They discussed one travel plan after another and discarded all. Each one seemed like reaching for the moon.

As they ate their simple meal, Jake remembered that while he was in Friedensfeld he had seen a neighbor woman come into the house to borrow a pinch of salt for soup she was making. In the inland areas, table salt was in short supply. Some homes had none. Food without salt was unpalatable. Salt was the solution to their problem. It would return the family to where it belonged.

The area in which the Janzens lived was the source of crude rock salt for refineries. Locks in the channel, dug through the hills along the shoreline, were opened periodically to allow the salt water to flood the land. The blistery heat of the summer sun evaporated the water, leaving a layer of hard dirty rock salt behind. Young Franz's job was to break up this layer, one to two inches deep, and push it into piles. Even unrefined salt would find a ready market once they left the area. Jake told young Franz to take his next pay in salt rather than money. He told the girls to sew small burlap bags large enough to hold about 10 pounds of salt, so they could help carry it.

When the local police pounded on the door and demanded that Jake come to the office to have his travel papers checked, everyone panicked, but he came back in good spirits. They had found his papers, given to him by his Jewish friend, in good order.

Everyone moved into action, for they had a workable plan. He returned to the local government office and asked for travel permits for the entire family. The officials agreed to let Mother Janzen and the children leave but forbade the father to quit his job at the mill. He was needed there. This wrinkle didn't deter Jake. The mother and children would leave with him and the father would try to elude the authorities and come later.

The captain of a freighter hauling salt to Kherson agreed to take the family along in exchange for the cow. One morning, at high tide, he came with a small boat to the shore where the family was gathered with their bags of salt, a few pieces of furniture and personal effects. Mother Janzen and the children waded out to the boat. Jake and young Franz carried the dresser, sewing machine, and the salt high above the lapping waves. Then the sailors rowed the boat to the ship, where the family was helped up the rope ladder. They spread their few belongings on the deck and sat on them for the first short lap of the journey across the Black Sea.

At Kherson, the flourishing city at the head of the Dnieper River, the captain unloaded them and their belongings on the dock under a small wooden shelter. While the children ate their dark bread, Jake set in motion the second part of his plan.

"You and the girls stay here," he said to his mother-in-law, "while Franz and I go to the bazaar. We'll look for someone from Sagradowka to take us along. There'll be someone there, I'm sure." His words comforted the timid woman with the raspy voice. They were to guard the salt. It was valuable.

He and Franz walked up and down the narrow aisles of the market, bustling with people ready to buy or sell dried fish, cloth, carpets, baskets, pottery, and leather goods. They mingled with the buyers, looking for Mennonites in the familiar visor cap, open shirt, and wooden sandals, and listening for the familiar sounds of Low German. But they saw only Russians and Ukrainians, and heard only Slavic dialects.

Then, near the cattle market, Jake glimpsed several ladder wagons, a type of conveyance unique to the Mennonites. The wagons had an extended undercarriage on both sides on which ladders were mounted at sloping angles to form a hayrack. At the end of the harvest season, these ladder wagons were converted to regular wagons again. The Makhno bandits had found their large capacity useful for looting during the Revolution.

"Franz," Jake shouted, "that's what we're looking for—come on!" The wagon owners were standing nearby discussing the sale of some hay with some Russians. When Jake greeted the men in Low German, they knew at once he was one of them.

"I want to get a family to Friedensfeld, Village #3, in Sagradowka district," he explained. He offered them a small bag of salt in exchange for a ride for the family. The men agreed. They knew about the salt shortage in the interior and drove with him to the dock to load the Janzens, the sewing machine, the dresser, and the salt. Each wagon took several family members.

After a long jolting ride, they arrived in Friedensfeld, where the villagers came to the street to watch the procession until it stopped at the relative's home. Over the next few days, many people came to welcome the family back, for they had known them earlier. To Jake's disappointment, however, few, including the wealthier people, brought food and clothing for the under-nourished family. Perhaps too many refugees had already returned from great distances and food supplies were limited. To everyone's joy and surprise, Father Janzen arrived by himself several weeks later after Jake had left, having eluded the officials.

Photograph of the Franz and Katharina Janzen extended family in 1928 around the coffin of Katharina, who gave birth to 12 children. It was common practice to have a family picture taken at the funeral with the open casket of the departed loved one. The funeral banner announces: Wiedersehn! (We will see you again!). Katharina and Franz with their seven younger children were the ones Jacob Funk went looking for and found in 1921.

At last Jake's job was done. "Now you take over," he said to Anna's brother. He had found what was lost and restored it to its rightful place. He could hardly wait to take to the road again, but this time the direction was eastward and home to the little red-haired wife waiting for him. A man from Rosenthal who had come to trade wheat for flour at Friedensfeld gave him a ride back home.

About a month after he had first left the house by the windmill on the hill, he too trudged up the lane to the Funk house, through the gate,

only this time it was late at night. Anna was already in bed. He knocked at her window, and she rose quickly to let him in.

She asked one question, "Did you find my parents?"

"Yes," he said, and dropped onto the bed exhausted.

"Where did you find them?"

"Prairie, more prairie, and still more prairie…then fields and fields of tumbleweed…there, beyond the tumbleweeds, I found your family." In a few minutes he was asleep, too tired to greet his family. He had fulfilled his promise to find Anna's family.

Later that year, on November 7, a great celebration was held with speeches and singing to mark four years of Communist rule in Russia. At Christmas, the Chortitza church celebrated two years since the robbing, killing, and destruction had begun to end. Help from Mennonite churches in America was beginning to trickle in. Their plight had not gone unnoticed. Anna was grateful that her lost family had been found—albeit in very impoverished condition. The Mennonites were beginning to think about starting life anew elsewhere. But where should they go?

Wotasup

Although the best soups were made with chicken, beef, or ham, during the difficult years housewives made soups with small fish (sprats), sausage, pigeons—anything to give it flavor. When even these were unavailable, they made water soup, which attempted to fill the aching stomachs of hungry family members.

* * * * *

6 medium potatoes, cubed
Water
2 small onions
1 bay leaf
A few peppercorns
Salt

In a soup kettle, combine potatoes and water and cover. Add onion, bay leaf, and peppercorns. Cook until potatoes are tender. Add a good-sized lump of butter or sour cream if available.

* * * * *

Years later, here in the United States, I make potato soup when I am hungry for food I ate as a child. I begin with 1 can of chicken stock, potatoes, sliced onions, celery, bay leaf, salt, and pepper, and cook until potatoes and onions are tender. Then I carefully poach 2 eggs in the soup. I add about ¼ cup sour cream before serving. This is my comfort food.

12

"There was a great famine in the land"

When the newly-widowed Susanna Funk and her children returned to Rosenthal from Kronsthal in January 1920, a new specter roamed the land in the grim form of famine. Jake and Anna were living with her to help with the windmill. The trials of this family, and of hundreds of others, continued to go deeper and deeper before they could say goodbye to this land that had viciously turned on them. Historians say that the famine was both politically induced and aided by natural causes.

The summer of 1920, the year Jake and Anna married, was dry, resulting in poor crops that the revolutionaries soon helped themselves to. Food was scarce, and becoming scarcer with each passing day. When a group of bandits bounced into the house to demand, "Go kill a chicken," the housewife killed it to appease the demands of these vicious ruffians, even if it was the last chicken she owned. Farmers had not even been able to save some cattle and, consequently, the children had to do without much-needed milk. Dogs virtually disappeared—they had been eaten. People turned to whatever they could find. They hunted crows and mice and turned for sustenance to family pets and sick horses.

One day, Anna saw the neighbors cooking something in a big pot over an open fire in the back yard. She went over to find they were cooking several cats. Jake caught a few gophers, which she fried. They were tender and tasted like pigeons. She cooked nettles, as well as mushrooms and weeds, particularly sour leaves. Stout people, who had insisted their weight was due to glandular problems, slowly turned into thin slivers of themselves when the abundance of spare ribs and liver sausage disappeared from their diets.

By the end of October 1921, with the lost Janzen family now in Sagradowka, the famine was in full force and farmers realized they would harvest next to nothing. The long, narrow farms, usually heavily dotted with large straw stacks, the signs of a good harvest and the family's

wealth, stood bare. Granaries, attics, and cellars, usually full of field and garden produce, stood empty that fall. Livestock was fed whatever food was available; in extreme situations, farmers used the straw from the thatched roofs, until finally the animals had to be slaughtered and eaten before they died of starvation.

Even fuel was in short supply because the meager crops produced few vine trimmings and straw, which the Mennonites needed to burn in the large wall ovens. In good times, the farmer distributed the manure accumulated over the winter over a small hard area, packed it down, dried it in the sun, and then cut it into slabs for fuel. Without animals to produce the manure, even this was no longer available. Without fuel, as the weather turned colder, whole families slept in one bed to stay warm. Store shelves remained empty. People who put themselves on rations survived better than others.

When Jake's mother, Susanna, talked to neighbors as they looked at the withered watermelon and pumpkin vines, and gooseberry and blackberry bushes with their small pinched fruit, one would say, "We have baked no bread for three weeks," to which the other would reply, "And we for four weeks." Bread was a staple in all Mennonite homes, eaten at every meal. There was less and less food in the Funk household sufficient to feed the eight people, which included Susanna, Jake and Anna and daughter Frieda, Jake's brothers Nick, Henry, and Abe, and sister Liese. The rack suspended near the ceiling on which the huge loaves of *bulkje* were stored was mostly empty.

People searched for food supplements to stretch their remaining grain. Bread was baked with anything that might yield some nourishment, like beets, leaves, corncobs, linseed or sunflower seed cakes, pumpkins, and barley. As the need grew greater, sawdust, chaff, and the despised Russian thistle seeds—tiny black ones—were added. Jake sent the chaff at the mill through the milling process again to glean a little more flour.

Few people planned the usual hog butchering, with its accompanying jolly social activities. The tradition of *faspa*, a light meal eaten leisurely in the middle of the afternoon with lots of good-natured visiting, fell out of favor also. The day's activities concerned themselves with finding food to keep body and soul alive. Yeast was seldom available, so some turned to making sourdough, but even that was difficult to keep going without white flour to add to the starter. Salt was impossible to purchase. Few people had lye and fat to make into soap.

The Funk family in the millhouse sat down together to their sparse meals and wondered if, in a few months, they would have to eat what some of the poorer people had resorted to. A villager had been driving

his weakened horses down the street when one creature collapsed from hunger and died. Before the owner could cut it loose from its traces, beggars—of which there were now dozens—had pounced on the carcass, dismembered it, and carried off the pieces while the man sat and cried, unable to do anything. Jake and Anna heard of a few people boiling the hides of butchered animals for nutrients, however few. Most villagers caught fish in the nearby Dnieper.

Rich people, who at one time appeared smartly dressed in fine woolens, pleats, tucks, and laces, now showed up with patches on top of patches like the others. The bandits had cleaned out the community of all good shoes and boots, so as the cold weather approached, the villagers turned to all kinds of makeshift footwear, from the familiar handmade *schlorre*, galoshes, and felt boots to rags. Growing children appeared most ragged, for as they outgrew their clothing, no new ones could be purchased or sewn. Sometimes burlap bags were fashioned into trousers.

In 1920, a shipment of clothing came from Canada, sponsored by the forerunner of Mennonite Central Committee, which began relief efforts in the area. Abe Funk writes that he "stood in line needing a pair of pants because the ones I was wearing had patches on patches." He was about nine at the time and growing fast. "I never prayed so hard in my life for a pair of pants as I did that day." When he made it to the front of the line, he was given a sweater, but no pants. He was still grateful.

About 75 years later, when living in Ontario, he had the opportunity to return the favor for the kindness he received as a child. He read a newspaper article about clothing being gathered to help people in his former home territory in Ukraine. He gathered up two sweaters, two pairs of pants, two jackets, and other items to donate to this humanitarian campaign and told the people collecting the donations, "I'm repaying a 75-year-old debt. I never thought I would ever have a chance to do so."

He remembered also that Christmas morning, when he and brother Nick had rushed to their places at the breakfast table half-hoping to find some gift from St. Nicholas for them at their plates. But times had changed. They each found two tiny packages on each plate wrapped in newspaper. As they opened them, their mother watched, eyes filled with tears. Although she was as hungry as everyone else, she had deprived herself of a slice of bread, cut it into four pieces, wrapped each one and given each boy two. The boys sucked on their cubes of hard, dry bread for hours, never chewing them, to make them last longer. Many a time, Abe recalled years later, he stood at the doorway to the once full pantry, looking at the empty shelves, remembering when they were filled with wonderful food of all kinds.

But at the height of the famine, there was little to no food. No dogs howled at night. No roosters crowed to greet the morning. No horses clip-clopped down the street. Stray dogs and cats slunk about at their own risk. Pets were carefully watched by those who still had a cat to kill mice. Animals, weak with hunger, lay down and couldn't get up alone. Everyone with a little strength pitched in to help the animal stand. Cows were used to plow alongside horses.

Even travel was affected. Men and women traveled long distances by foot, often in *schlorre*, as my father had when he went looking for my mother's displaced family. If something had to be hauled, a small cart was fashioned out of a few pieces of board on an axle instead of using heavy wagons, lightening the load for the weakened horses.

As the late fall of 1921 turned into winter, the people could see no hope of help coming from anyone. Some became bitter, closing their hearts and spirits to any words about God and his love. All families looked for items to sell at the bazaar for flour or grain. Dressers, dishes, watches, clocks, any jewelry that was left, implements, and even the last few animals were handed over if it meant food for a few more days. A bed or dresser sold for 10–15 pounds of barley flour, which resulted in hard, prickly bread, difficult to digest.

All kinds of stories were told about survival. One man sold his prized possession—his organ. The family had sung together around that instrument for years. He had sold one piece of furniture after another, but was determined to keep the organ, for without it he didn't think he could live. When his little daughter had asked him, "Papa, why don't you buy us some bread?" he had the answer inside himself: "Because I love my organ more than you." That day, he took the organ to the city and sold it. The house was now quiet, but so was his conscience.

Each day, funeral processions, strings of beggars, and hungry neighbors going about their business moved past the Funk home. Regularly, bodies wrapped in sheets so they looked like mummies, were being transported on a small wagon to the graveyards. On windy days, the sharp breeze whipped the graying beard and hair on the blackened faces of old men and women. Had life's storms not punished them enough? Must they continue the assault after death?

When it seemed the typhus epidemic had run its course and conditions were settling down, churches held a big funeral service for all who had been murdered or died of disease. Everyone went to the cemetery to sing, pray, and decorate the graves, hoping this would put closure to a difficult chapter. May 17, 1920, the day of Pentecost, was

observed as usual in the Rosenthal/Chortitza with three days of church services.

The last of the grain in some Mennonite colonies and the surrounding communities peopled by Russians, German Lutherans, and German Catholics had been used up. Little seed and few implements were available for spring planting. Everything of value was gone. The livestock the bandits had stolen was not yet replaced. Farmers, who had proudly owned eight to ten well-groomed horses, now hitched a couple of leftover nags to a few cows to plow and sow the little seed available. Sometimes the man and his wife added their meager strength to that of the animals.

Bread prices and taxes rose astronomically. Tsarist money was worthless, and the new ruble inflated more and more. During normal times, the poor found the taxes hard to pay; now, it was impossible. Some of the neighboring Russian peasants turned their children out to beg, for they no longer had food to give them. The villages became crowded with refugees, who stood at the door with toothpick limbs and swollen abdomens asking for a little bread. Housewives gave what they could. When they themselves were down to the last flour in the sack, and could give only water or clear soup to beggars, they closed the door, and then the windows, for beggars peered in wherever they could to see if someone was eating.

With the beggars came the thieves. With no police or working village government, the villagers were unable to control this new plague. The village watchman, a familiar sound and face, no longer made his rounds. A committee of villagers was organized to deal with thievery, and to punish as needed. Sermons constantly admonished the people to refrain from stealing and to share whatever they had, but here and there, a father, a mother, could no longer hold out when there was no food in the house, no longer trusting God to provide and resorting instead to theft. The anger and power of the men in control sometimes overcame them; and a few thieving persons were beaten so severely they died.

Orphaned children were distributed among several families, because few homes could add six or seven mouths, even small ones, to their table. Some of these orphans later accompanied their adoptive families to Canada.

Everyone looked around for any leftover saleable items to exchange at the bazaar for flour or grain. Now even the worst of household effects that had been buried to escape the anarchists, some broken-down implements, and the last few animals were bartered for food. It meant life for a few more days.

At the beginning of the terrible times, church functions were scheduled less often. No one had energy to attend. Each Sunday morning, the elder read the lists of sick and dead. Usually it was from typhus or hunger. The congregation sat silent, pale, unmoved by his announcement, as if all feeling had left them.

At first, the request for dried cherries or other fruit to make juice for the Lord's Supper could be complied with. When those were no longer available, the request was for lowly beet juice. Eventually this once sacred ordinance was discontinued. The alms box in church had long since been emptied and never refilled. Berry-picking for food was almost futile, for everyone else had the same idea. The wild berry bushes were picked clean.

For a while, the local village authorities set up soup kitchens for the very destitute, but eventually these were discontinued when large supplies of food were no longer available

Little Frieda, once an active toddler, now sat slumped on the blanket on the floor, too weak to walk. When Jake called to her, she tried to get up but couldn't. He had seen Anna's eyes fill with tears as she turned away. Their child no longer smiled or laughed when he took her on his knee to give her a ride. He knew what the trouble was—not enough good nourishment. Another baby was already on the way. Something had to be sold, but there were few items left. When he entered the room one day with his wedding ring in his hand, Anna handed him her wedding ring also before he could say a word. Both knew that rings were not needed for a marriage that had survived what they had experienced. Neither Anna nor Jake ever wore a ring again, even after they could afford several.

The year closed on a hard note, yet for some, their earlier hardness softened and they began coming to church services, asking for spiritual help. In the midst of physical starvation, spiritual food was available and hundreds were attracted to the evangelical Mennonite Brethren and *Allianz* churches. The services grew larger as the people listened to sermons on the need to live as Christians, and to care for one another and trust again—even though it seemed as if God had turned his back on them.

Rumors increased that the American Mennonites, their brothers and sisters in faith, were planning to send help. Negotiations were in progress. Some feared that help would come too late. In early spring of 1922, about February, the Mennonites in Ukraine had assurance that help was on its way. The American Mennonite Relief Administration (AMRA), forerunner of Mennonite Central Committee, had been

organized, and carloads of flour, rice, cornmeal, and other foodstuffs, as well as clothing and implements, were on their way.[23] Food kitchens would be set up in larger villages to prepare one hot meal per day for the neediest. One such kitchen would open in Chortitza, the adjoining village to Rosenthal, where Susanna Funk and her children lived. Those in charge were looking for volunteers to work in these kitchens.

Anna looked at little Frieda. Workers would be given double rations, not as pay, but to give them strength to work. She knew she could cook for large groups because of her five years' experience at Bethania Hospital for the mentally ill. Jake had managed a field hospital kitchen warehouse in the army.

Mother Susanna went to the local officials to tell them her children, Jake and Anna, were prepared to work in the kitchen. Jake couldn't make the trip himself because he was busy with the mill, and Anna was at home with Frieda.

Anna waited impatiently for Susanna's return, spinning silk on the spinning wheel to kill time. She had started her own silkworm colony in the empty attic. Each day she and Jake's brothers hauled in loads of mulberry branches for the growing worms. The sound of their chewing was like soft rain falling on the trees when she walked into the attic. She baked the cocoons in the oven to kill the larva and then unwound the silk in boiling water. After being spun, the silk made excellent thread, otherwise unavailable.

Finally, Susanna returned.

"Did you tell them we had experience cooking at Bethania?" Anna asked.

"No, we started talking about rations and who they would be for…and it slipped my mind."

Disappointed, Anna returned to her spinning, but prayed to accept God's will, whatever it might be. Work meant food, especially for little Frieda, whose thin face stared at Anna from her cradle. The next day, two official-looking men strode up the hill to the house by the mill to interview the young couple that wanted to cook large quantities of food for the hungry.

"Can you cook?"

Anna explained her credentials without trying to seem overzealous. She knew she was a good cook, but she hadn't been able to prove her skills for some time. She and Jake were hired on the spot, and the next

[23] See Peter C. Hiebert and Orie O. Miller, eds., *Feeding the Hungry: Russia Famine 1919–1925* (Mennonite Central Committee, 1929).

day they moved their few personal belongings to Chortitza, to serve in the relief kitchen.

On March 13, 1922, the food from America arrived and was unloaded in the warehouse. People stood and gawked at the many sacks of flour, rice, and beans, in quantities such as they had not seen for months. The kitchen and dining room were housed in the former public school, closed for some time. Each kitchen was supplied with one or more large iron kettles, which held 50–60 gallons. Large outside ovens were quickly built of brick; benches, tables, and chairs were borrowed or cheaply constructed. Each person brought a soup bowl and spoon. People were encouraged to bring fuel, for this communal arrangement used less fuel than if each family took home raw food products to cook at home. Young boys split wood in exchange for rations. Some people contributed salt.

The first Sunday after the kitchen opened in Chortitza, all religious bodies, including Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren, *Allianz*, and Lutherans, joined in a service of praise to God for hearing and answering their prayers for food. The minister used Hebrews 13:16 as his text: "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." In many homes, a parent or a child had not survived. For them this gracious gift of food had come too late.

Jake and the other helpers started the fire early in the morning to prepare the large quantities of beans and grits. The food was measured and weighed carefully, so that only enough for the day's needs was prepared. Cornmeal and rice were cooked with evaporated milk, sugar, and a little lard. Lacking a can opener, Jake had to pry open all milk cans with a knife, a tiring task. Flour was added to the cocoa, served twice a week, to make it more nourishing, but some children found keeping this new food down a problem. Twice a week, the kitchen served hominy grits cooked in water with vegetable shortening added. Anna prided herself that at the Chortitza kitchen, the rice was never burned in the big kettles as she heard it was at other kitchens. For their work, the helpers received lodging and double rations to give them strength to work.

Her old skills, learned at Bethania, came back in a hurry. Serving 800 to 1,000 people once a day was a challenge. Besides Jake and Anna, two men carried water and three girls helped with the cooking. That first noon, when the doors swung open to admit ration card holders (children, elderly people, the sick, and pregnant women), Anna watched as the people in ragged clothing and patched footwear sat down to eat. After the prayer of thanksgiving, the little children bit into the wonderfully soft buns, something some had never tasted before. Each person was given

one-third pound of bread and enough thick soup to fill the soup bowl to the rim, approximately 788 calories in total, to supplement what they were eating at home. Children scraped bowls clean and then licked them. Adults sopped up every drop with a piece of bread. Family members or neighbors carried the daily ration home for the sick or for children under the age of three.

Anna Funk in her later years. In 1921, during the famine, her wedding ring was sold for food. She never again wore one, saying she didn't need a ring to hold her marriage together. Notice the samovar behind her, carried from Russia to Canada in 1923 in a tin cradle.

The AMRA had arranged with the Russian government that the neediest would be fed regardless of race or creed. Although attempts were made to look after the needs of Mennonites, the kitchen staff soon found themselves feeding thieves, vagabonds, and the lazy, while good people who had struggled and saved and put themselves on rations had to go on eating their heavy black bread. Local citizens protested—they should receive food because their cupboards were bare. If a person

owned livestock, such as cows or horses, they were considered as still having something that could be sold for food. One woman always complained that she had been given the smallest bun. One day the food handlers played a joke on her, and gave her the smallest bun they could find. She never complained again.

In a matter of weeks the darkened eyes and hollow cheeks changed and the frail bodies of the children and sickly put on weight. Even Frieda once again regained her former frisky spirits and was toddling around, getting underfoot as Jake and Anna worked to prepare meals each day. Their daughter, Anna (Annie, Anne) Jacovlena, was born January 17, 1923, with a local midwife in attendance. Jake and Anna kept working in the kitchen.

For some, the new rations were strange and hard to stomach. This new brownish product the children were urged to drink called cocoa was difficult to get down. And when the mothers were given powdered milk, cocoa, sugar, rice, or cornmeal and butter to take home with them, the instructions weren't clear what to do with these foods, some strange to them. Were they supposed to mix it all together and eat it like a soup, or what? Some did, coming up with strange thick brown concoction that resembled nothing Mennonites had ever eaten. Little Frieda reacted to this food, so Anna and sister-in-law Liese walked six miles to see a doctor, wheeling the toddler in a baby carriage. The doctor said, "Don't feed her cocoa." "But what if that's all I have?" Years later, when we children visited our Grandmother Susanna in Hague, she still thickened the cocoa with flour for us children to drink, causing it to form slimy skins we couldn't get down.

1922 was a beautiful spring. The villagers planted watermelons, potatoes, and melons, and used donated seed for grain from America. Those who had received money from America bought horses and livestock. AMRA supplied tractors and other implements. Anna planted some potatoes that had rotted on the way to Ukraine from Holland, and found they grew well. When the plants began to produce, and she was about to dig them up, she found someone had been there ahead of her.

The food kitchens continued throughout the summer. Government control grew stronger, and fewer reports of robberies and murders on outlying farms or roads were aired, although still common. The Funk family heard of a whole family being cruelly whipped and then strangled with the reins of their horses. A man and his companion on their way to Kherson had been murdered.

During the summer of 1922, Anna traveled by open wagon with little Frieda to Sagradowka to visit her parents and family in their new

location. To her distress, she found them living in extreme poverty. She couldn't eat when there was so little to eat, and lost considerable weight. She couldn't understand why relatives had helped this destitute family so little. After she returned home to Rosenthal, she sent some food and clothing from their limited supply.

On the second Sunday of October, the "Mennonite Baptists," or *Allianz* church members, celebrated a mission harvest festival in Rosenthal, with people coming from neighboring villages. Meatless *borscht* was served. At Christmas of that same year, a big celebration took place in the Chortitza church. People were looking forward with more hope.

By the spring of 1923, outward signs of revolution had almost disappeared. Crop prospects looked better. Mennonites were ordered to clear all cornstalks and other trash from fields because the following week, tractors provided by American Mennonites were coming to plow the land. Would wonders never cease? Villagers fixed fences and cultivated gardens to return their yards to their former state of neatness and beauty. Not as many people were dying from hunger, disease, or murder, yet peace was only outward, not internal. Inside hearts hope was still mixed with fear.

People were voicing concern about leaving the country. Their love for what had been their homeland since the late 1700s had weakened. When the Bolshevists came into power and nationalized farms and factories, they took away the personal property and industries the Mennonites had achieved fame for and worked hard to bring to new heights of prosperity. They had lost pride of ownership and achievement as the new government took more land. The changes in school curricula also threatened the spiritual heritage this peace-loving people had received from their forefathers. It was time to think about leaving for another country. But which country would accept them, without money, without physical strength, only with inner courage and faith that God would provide?

Pluememooss

The famine robbed the people of more than just nutrients for their bodies. It also robbed them of a prime way of showing love and caring. A father showed love by providing bountifully for his family. A mother showed love by her ability to serve a satisfying meal to those around her table. Mealtimes were when families bonded. It is hard to eat soul-satisfying food heartily with enemies nudging your elbow. Food was God-given. It is hard to bless food, God's gift and the fruit of one's labor, at the beginning and end of a meal eaten in anger.

My mother, a highly intelligent woman, used cooking and baking to exhibit her creativity at a time when women were not encouraged in intellectual pursuits. Other than needlework, women like her had few options. She reveled in praises of her light, fluffy cinnamon rolls.

Pluememooss, or fruit soup, was served, hot or cold, at every major event—weddings, butcherings, threshing times, Sunday dinners—because it could be made ahead in large quantities and still tasted good the second or third day.

Pluememooss is essentially a sweet soup made of fresh or dried fruit, of which there was an abundance in Ukraine. The fruit was cooked with water until tender, then thickened with flour or even potato water, sweetened with sugar and "thinned" with rich milk or cream. During the famine, it would have been made with wild berries if they could be found, and thinned, and then thinned some more with water to make it go further. I no longer make the traditional recipe using dried prunes and raisins, but with fresh pears, a gentler product.

* * * * *

Slice and gently simmer 3–4 sliced Bartlett pears in enough water to cover them with a cinnamon stick until tender. Mix 2–3 tablespoons cornstarch mixed with a little water and add to the pears, stirring gently to prevent lumping. Add ½ tsp salt and about ½ cup sugar, or to taste. When it is cool, add ½ cup cream or half & half. Yes, cream always shows up at the end somewhere in a Mennonite dish.

13

Leaving home for a better home

A low-grade emigration fever spread through the Mennonite colonies at the beginning of the Revolution. In 1920, a Study Commission was organized in Molotschna to explore possibilities for leaving. Historic precedents for such a move by the Mennonites were numerous: from the Netherlands to Prussia and from there to Russia; from Germany and Switzerland to America; from Russia to the USA and Canada in the 1870s.

Why leave? Reasons were plentiful. Russification and assimilation with the surrounding culture were inevitable, a trend the Mennonites resisted as a people who believed in staying apart as the "quiet in the land." Already, it was happening in the schools—they could no longer choose teachers and curriculum. Economic devastation was apparent everywhere, making it hard for the thrifty, hard-working Mennonite villagers to envision a recovery equal to what they had once known. The new government did not fully appreciate the top-notch agricultural skills of the colonists. Compromise with atheistic Bolshevism and their own religious beliefs seemed impossible.

But where would the Mennonites find a new home? Canada, with its harsh climate and huge territory, would mean the Mennonites might be scattered and lose their cohesiveness.

On February 7, 1922, the body in attendance at a meeting to discuss emigration voted yes to immigration to Canada and authorized the Study Commission to start plans to leave for those desiring to go. By spring, a spirit of optimism had returned to the colonies. Debates about whether to leave or stay were long, loud, and sometimes angry, as people weighed their options, shifting from one position to the other.

"Times will improve. They can never again get as bad as they were."

"People in Canada don't want us. They fear we will take away their jobs. They're planning to protest before their government if it gives us *Russlaender* visas. They think we're Bolshevists."

"If you go to America, you will be made slaves of the capitalists. In a few years, you'll want to return, and Russia won't let you come back."

"If you land in the middle of Canada, the Indians will scalp you."

"What if the doctors turn a child down at the border? What will happen to him or her? And to you if you stay with the child?"

Opinion in the Funk home shifted strongly toward immediate migration the day that an agitated son John rushed into the house by the mill with the report that the Bolshevik military had lopped off the head of his close friend, an open critic of the new regime. They had spiked it on a pole and paraded it down the street as a warning to anyone considering resisting the new government. Immediately, John applied for exit permits for himself, his wife, and two young sons. He had been too close to his friend to feel at ease in a country where men were being picked up for any reason, however slight, as being anti-government and beheaded.

Jake, next in line, was still too close to the age of conscription to feel comfortable in Russia. His four years in the army as a medic would count for nothing if another war broke out. Furthermore, his prospects of ever owning land were dim in this new economy where property was seized and divided, not even among the sons of the original owners as the custom had been for decades. He hesitated, but not for long. He didn't attend meetings about the matter, but his resourceful mother and equally strong-minded wife pressured him to start working on their exit papers. And if he wouldn't do it, they would. He went to work to get the proper documents.

People were perplexed. Some who had decided to leave changed their minds. Some who had already received exit documents wavered, newly convinced a better future lay ahead in Russia with its new regime. A good rain or a sudden easing of taxes made groupthink volatile. Most, however, stayed with their original decision to leave the country. Mennonites knew each person had to decide personally, yet they were members of a body. That body's endorsement was important to them.

In the summer of June 1923 all teachers gathered each morning in the newly-opened teacher training school in Chortitza to hear two party members indoctrinate them into Bolshevik offerings. The Mennonites, however, were unconvinced. They were waiting for word from their deputies sent to Kharkov to expedite the planned group migration to Canada.

During World War I, feelings against German-speaking people, including Mennonites, had run high in Canada and the USA for their refusal to go to war and their reluctance to assimilate. Based on this experience, both Canada and the USA refused to accept refugees from pacifist religious groups: Mennonites, Hutterites, and Doukhobors. A delegation of Canadian Mennonites traveled to Ottawa, asking for a policy reversal to help their suffering relatives in Russia come to Canada. While there, they met with William Lyon Mackenzie King, leader of the Liberal party of Canada, who was friendly to the Mennonites and supported their migration to the developing country in need of farmers.[24] He promised that if the Liberals were elected, his government would rescind the Order-in-Council barring the mass entry of Mennonites to Canada. The Liberals won the election of 1921 and King kept his promise. On June 2, 1922, the Liberal government repealed the Order-in-Council, winning the faithful support of many Mennonites for decades to come. Years later in Blaine Lake, Anna still sang his praises. He had opened the doors for them.

The Canadian Pacific Railway declared it was willing to bring the Mennonite refugees over on credit—a first for that institution. But after hearing of this new decision, the Soviet government worked to prevent the mass Mennonite emigration through their officials, who showed how the *Neue Oekonomische Politik*, at full power, would improve their lot considerably if they remained in Russia. Those intent on leaving were not convinced.

The Russian Mennonites had received their go-ahead signal with the news about the repeal of the Order-in-Council in Canada, and began liquidating assets. The landless especially wanted to emigrate. Canada was the land of the future. But always, there were obstacles. Canada imposed rigid health standards on immigrants, many of whom had been saved from starvation by the relief kitchens and were not in the best of health. The Canadian government also stipulated other conditions: The new immigrants must be assured shelter and support, and be placed on the land, because Canada needed farmers. None must become a public charge for five years. There were many other issues to resolve, so despite much wrangling, no emigrants left in 1922.

Efforts to bring Russian Mennonites to Canada were also being resourcefully discussed and planned by Canadian Mennonite leaders. A new hitch came up: What would happen to those emigrants who left the

[24] See Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites Since the Communist Revolution* (Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council, 1962), 103.

country but did not pass Canadian medical examinations at the Latvian border? Germany agreed to accept medical rejects for diseases such as trachoma or tuberculosis, as well as the physically and mentally handicapped. But where would they go? Who would pay for them?

Few prospective immigrants had money. Years of war, revolution, famine, and disease had exhausted all resources. Most would have to travel on credit offered by the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Canadian Board of Colonization, much involved in the whole effort, also had no money for passage for the new immigrants, which cost $140 for adults. Two children could travel for the price of one adult. Travel expenses for the first 3,000 emigrants would be at least $400,000, all on credit.

Despite the huge hurdles, the Board of Colonization agreed to all stipulations, and Elder David Toews of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, courageously signed a personal promissory note on behalf of the Board pledging repayment of the huge sum, plus interest.

Towards spring, specific plans for large groups of Mennonites to leave the country via Latvia were arranged, with help from the Canadian Board of Colonization under the leadership of Elder Toews. People on both sides of the ocean recognized the pressing need to find a way out of Ukraine. The tremendous strength of the Mennonite people revealed itself again and again, as Mennonite leaders from Ukraine traveled to Moscow and back to discuss issues with the proper authorities, speaking on behalf of the body, not just as individuals. Then a telegram arrived astonishing everyone: The list of the first three thousand persons had been confirmed. Groups of one thousand persons would leave at intervals of about two weeks. The first thousand should get ready to leave in two weeks. About one-third of the village of Osterwick, where Johann and Susanna Funk had once lived, planned to find a new home in Canada.

Activity moved to high speed, as those on the first list gave away their household goods or sold them at auction sales. Land could not be sold, since it now belonged to the state. Inflation leapt out of bounds. The price of butter had risen to eight million rubles per pound.

Jake's older brother John, with his wife and two sons, left on June 22, 1923, as part of a group of 726 emigrants in 38 freight cars. Community, church, and family ties, as well as long-standing friendships, were sacrificed for the hope of finding a better way of life. This group stopped in Riga, Latvia, which many of their ancestors had passed through in 1798 on their way to Ukraine, following Empress Catharine's invitation to the Mennonites of Prussia to become her much-valued settlers and citizens. From there, they embarked on the *Empress of France*,

landing on July 17 at the port of Quebec, and then on into the interior by train. They arrived in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, four days later.

Immigrants were expected to work in the harvest. Food and shelter for the first while would be provided by the host and any money earned should be returned at once to start payment on the travel debt, as interest on the original amount was increasing daily.

Yet on this momentous occasion—the arrival of relatives and friends from Ukraine—Mennonites from far away gathered in Rosthern by whatever conveyance they could muster to greet the newcomers at the railway station. It was a homecoming. Relatives long separated were reunited. Tears of sorrow over family members lost in the Revolution and famine and cries of joy at reunions were abundant. The total number of 450 cars parked nearby was noted. After all the Russian Mennonites had stepped off the train, the much-respected Elder Toews spoke at an open meeting briefly, and together the large crowd sang, *Gott Gruesse dich* and *Nun danket alle Gott*.

Gerald Brown, a reporter from the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, described the service: "A great hush fell upon the assembled thousands and to the ears of the Canadians came a soft, slow chant, *Lobe den Herrn den Maechtigen Koenig der Ehren*, the German equivalent of our own 'Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow.' Softly the chant arose and fell, a musical expression of the great tragedy and heartbreak of the Mennonites. Then the Canadian Mennonites took up the song, and the tone increased in volume, growing deeper and fuller, until the melody was pouring forth from several thousand throats. When that first note of the song burst upon the air, every Mennonite removed his hat, and the others paid like tribute."

There were many in the crowd who had sprung from other nations, but the significance of the song was manifest to them when they saw their Mennonite friends bare their heads and when they saw grown men they had known for years burst into tears. It was truly a momentous occasion for Mennonites in Canada, as well as for those who had just arrived hoping to make Canada their home. One leading clergyman from the area is reported to have said: "Is that the kind of immigrants you are bringing in? Why, then, bring in lots of them!"

According to historian Frank H. Epp, public opinion among Canadians and *Kanadier* (Mennonites who had come in an earlier migration) underwent a remarkable change with the actual arrival of the Russian Mennonites. All former resentment towards their coming was gone. Following the service, the immigrants were registered and assigned to host homes. Hundreds of *Kanadier* provided food, shelter, and work,

if possible, for the 20,000 Mennonites who arrived from Russia between 1923 and 1929, many with limited resources, some landing in Ontario, others in Manitoba, and still others in Saskatchewan and Alberta. A few stragglers managed to find their way in 1930.

John, wife Susanna, and their boys went to the home of John's uncle Abram D. Schellenberg, who had migrated to Canada in 1912, as mentioned in an earlier chapter. He was one of 26 big-hearted people in the Rosthern-Laird-Hepburn area who had signed up to accept this first group of Russian immigrants. He returned again in two weeks to pick up another group, and then again to receive the third group of Funk relatives. He found them work in his establishment, a wholesale grocery and store business.

The next group, which included Jake and Anna, received word that it was their turn to leave on July 2, 1923. To Anna's dismay those officials arranging for passports, for some unknown reason, had decided to split the remainder of Mother Susanna's family between two passports leaving at different times. Had they gotten family members mixed up? Jake, Anna, and their two little daughters, Frieda and Annie, and Jake's two young brothers, Nick and Abe, received permission to leave with this second group. Peter and his wife Tina were planning to remain in Russia for the time being. Susanna and her other unmarried children, Henry and Liese, were not on this list to leave early in July. They would come later. What to do? For a moment, panic struck the family.

A family conference was held. If Nick and Abe did not leave now and their names were omitted from the next list, then Susanna and her two children might have permission to leave and the two young boys wouldn't. Despite misgivings about burdening Anna with two young boys, in addition to her own six-month-old infant and a toddler, the family decided to leave arrangements as they were. "Let's not upset the apple cart." Anna was unhappy about the prospect of traveling with four young children for many weeks to a new land and then caring for them until the next group arrived, if ever. But there was no way out of the dilemma.

The AMRA had given Jake and Anna enough flour to bake *tweeback* for the journey as a small reward for having worked in the food kitchen for over a year. They added $10 in cash and a quilt with some attractive gingham on one side. When the women at the feeding kitchen made quilts, the cloth for the back side was usually a half-yard or more too long. Anna suggested that, instead of cutting it off, they tucked it in to add extra warmth, not knowing she would receive one of these quilts. Anna ripped the quilt apart and made dresses for Annie and Frieda out

of the extra length of gingham. Jake located enough flannelette for six polka-dotted diapers. Jake's sister Liese also sewed some dresses for the girls from a wide skirt. Clothing preparation ended with these items. Their few possessions included some clothing, a few enamel dishes, flatware, and a little bedding—and a large samovar they were taking along to give to Abram Schellenberg's wife, Margaretha.

Each family had to take along enough food for the two-week journey from Chortitza to the Latvian border. In addition to roasted *tweeback*, which became their staple food, Anna packed dried fruit, potatoes, and salt pork in wicker baskets to cook in the samovar with the fancy medallions. Jake had made a tin cradle for little Annie to sleep in, with wooden ends and rope handles. His young brothers were responsible for carrying the large, heavy samovar in the homely cradle when changing modes of transportation.

General public sanitation had been long neglected in Russia. Water sources, including springs, wells, and reservoirs, were often unsanitary, so non-boiled water was regarded with suspicion. Russia became a tea-drinking country, and the samovar a most necessary part of each household. Of course, water boiled in any container—kettle or pot—could serve satisfactorily, but not for the Russians, and eventually not for the Mennonites. Tea made with water boiled in a pot used for soup and other foods did not taste as good as that made exclusively in a samovar.

The word *samo* means self, and *var* means cooking, implying that samovar provides a labor-free procedure for boiling water for tea. In actuality, it was nothing of the sort. It often took up to twenty minutes to get some paper, then a few dry sticks of wood, then charcoal to burn, all the while huffing and puffing at the flames to keep them burning enough for the coals to catch fire. After the water reached boiling point, the samovar was carried to the table and placed on a metal tray. Once the samovar stood proudly on the table, the water was ready to be poured into each cup, in addition to the strong tea brewed in a small pot kept warm on top. With a little essence of tea and some hot water, the drinking could begin—all day if need be. It was a wonderful custom when electricity was unavailable.

The day before this second group was to leave, the men (and some women) went to the station to clean the dirty freight cars to which they had been assigned—about 25–28 persons per car, more than half of them children. These cars were smaller than Canadian freight cars. They washed the inside with hot water and built sleeping platforms and seats out of boards, two on each side, for the long trip to the Latvian border. One platform was about a foot from the floor and the other about

halfway up, making possible four compartments, one for each family. An adult could stand only in the center, and had to crawl in and out of the platforms, each of which held a family of four to six or more.

Each group of four to five families was to spend the next weeks in these confined quarters on the way to the seaport Riga in Latvia. Jake, Anna, and the four children represented one family unit. Jacob and Tina Dyck and their four or five children were the second. A Schroeder family, a Pauls family, and Neufeld family completed their group. That Jake and Anna and the Dyck family remained staunch friends later when the Dycks lived in Laird is testimony to the willingness of all to work at getting along well in this confined space with a dozen small children.

About four families lived in one of these small freight cars for about two weeks en route to Riga, providing their own food along the way. Photograph in Gerhard Lohrenz, Heritage Remembered: A Pictorial Survey of Mennonites in Prussia and Russia*, revised and enlarged (Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1977), 264.*

On departure day, a huge crowd arrived at the station at the far end of the village of Chortitza to say their final farewells. People were milling around among the many chests and boxes. Finally, towards evening, a locomotive arrived and the people knew it was time to let go. The time had come. Together, those leaving and those staying—anyone who wasn't crying—sang *Befiehl du deine Wege* and *Gott mit euch bis wir uns wiedersehn*. The church elder prayed.

Jake's mother accompanied them to the train station. After admonishing her two young sons to be good, she turned abruptly and

walked down the road. She didn't wait to see the train pull out of the station. As little Abe watched his mother disappear, wearing her familiar black and grey shawl, he debated whether to run after her. Would he ever see his mother again? Others had made the decision for him to leave, so he climbed into the boxcar up the rope ladder, hid in a corner, and cried. He felt abandoned.

As many as possible stood before the open door of the train car for the last glimpse of Rosenthal, singing softly, *Nun ade, du mein lieb Heimatland.* At Einlage, the train crossed the Dnieper River, that wonderful river with its stony banks and sandy beaches and fond memories of school picnics on its banks and swimming in its water.

At Alexandrowsk, more cars and more immigrants were added, all anxious to leave the country. Again, the same procedure of hymns, prayers, and goodbyes, as well as parting thrusts that they were fools for leaving. Keep going fast, as fast as possible, they told the train, but it could not be hurried, for it made many stops. Always the passengers could see soldiers standing at attention at street corners and road checkpoints sending the old terror into their hearts.

By the next day, the four families leaving with Jake and Anna settled in for a two-week train ride, as did all the others. The train moved slowly, stopping long and often. The locomotive consumed large quantities of wood, and belched showers of sparks out of the smokestack whenever the firebox was refilled. The fuel supply had to be replenished frequently by hand from piles by the side of the track. Once, it stopped by a small lake and everyone rushed out to bathe in the nude—discreetly, of course, with men in one area and women and children in the other. Who had a bathing suit in those times? Mothers quickly rinsed out diapers and other clothing.

In a large city in Russia, everyone was examined by a doctor, again in the nude, something uncomfortable for these modest Mennonites, but followed by a steam bath, a most welcome treat.

Jake had made a movable barricade about four feet high to place before the sliding door, so that the travelers could stand and look out without danger of falling out when the train was moving. At other times, the door was kept closed to keep smoke from being drawn in. At Smolensk, for the last time, they drank from the ancient Dnieper River and said goodbye to the body of water that had known much of their life's pilgrimage.

Spirits remained high as the train chugged along. Birthdays were special days. Flowers picked alongside the track decorated the car in which the birthday person was riding. Jake Funk celebrated his 27th

birthday on July 11, so the samovar was set up to make tea. The pipe was poked through a hole in the side of the car to let out smoke, and the women served tea, hard sugar lumps, and *tweeback*. One sugar lump held in the mouth lasted through two or three glasses of tea. At the next stop, the passengers in the car behind them, which had been on the receiving end of the smoke, complained, "Do you want to smoke us out?" Anna thought it was hilariously funny. It had been a happy day. Cooking was usually done when the train stopped, not en route, by boiling potatoes in the samovar.

The only privacy was a blanket hung in front of the opening to each family's platform. The Funk family had the lower left cubbyhole, but the family above them had a window about one by two feet. Because they had no lamps, when it got dark, everyone went to bed. At the first glimpse of dawn, everyone arose and began getting ready for the day.

From time to time, the train pulled onto a siding, usually in the countryside. At once, a couple of men ran to the engineer to find out the length of the stop. The others hung out of the door waiting for the decision. The engineer would say, "*Eine Stunde*," or some other period of time. At once, everyone poured out of the train and headed for the trees and bushes. Soon, there was a man behind every tree and a woman's head above every bush, to be quickly replaced by newcomers. Anyone who ventured near a bush without a mission was ordered in no uncertain terms to move along. A new batch of people waited to use the same trees and bushes, with warnings to watch where they walked. At night or other times, the travelers used a thunder mug, aptly labeled, emptied out of the sliding door, sometimes with unfortunate consequences for the person in the next car who stuck his head out for air.

At each stop, someone immediately found a well or water tap. There was always one somewhere. Everyone grabbed a pot or kettle or whatever utensil was available to fill with water to wash. Samovars were brought out and fires started in them with charcoal. Soon the water was boiling. Lunch was potatoes, salt pork, and roasted *tweeback* dunked in hot water or tea.

After a while, the engine would return from wherever it had gone to. Some engineers made the hookup so skillfully the travelers hardly felt it. Others rammed the train so hard that if they weren't hanging on, they ended up in someone's lap. If the engine couldn't back up a steep grade, the younger men got out, shouting, laughing, and joking, pushing the steam locomotive until it had made it to the top, where they climbed in before it picked up much speed.

On July 14 at 10:30 a.m., the train arrived at a place called Weliki Luki near the Latvian border. The cars were filled with tension, for though the people carried their exit visas, they could still be sent back. The Red soldiers went through all baggage, checked all papers, counted all heads, and searched the cars before they left the train and allowed the train and its anxious passengers to slowly inch across the border. As the last car passed the marker, the Red Gate, the emigrants released their emotions in a burst of thankfulness. They needed no prompting to sing heartily, "Now thank we all our God." Free at last! The men threw their caps in the air—but only if they were old ones.

At Sebezh, Latvia, passengers had to bathe, and all clothing and personal belongings were disinfected so as not to carry disease into the country. That night, the emigrants slept in barracks and were served a thick soup and bread before retiring. The journey continued towards Riga, the capital city. Here, Dr. Dryce examined their heart, lungs, and eyes, looking in particular for the disease trachoma. No Mennonite immigrant was to become a public charge in Canada for five years.

They gathered to sing together that evening to muster courage before the next stage of the journey. Fear of being rejected by the very strict Canadian doctor they were to meet soon lingered in each person's soul. Several hundred of the first group had had to stay behind in Germany until full recovery took place. Which of their group would join that waiting group of rejects? If the doctor said one family member couldn't go on, what would the others do, especially if that person was a child? They had sold all their belongings and had nothing to return to in their home settlements. The Russian government would not accept them anyway. They did what they could to make themselves look well, forcing smiles, pinching cheeks, standing erect, answering questions they only half understood.

Anna worried about Frieda and Annie. Frieda had improved considerably, and she was still nursing Annie. She did her utmost to make sure they were clean and in fresh clothing when the doctor examined them. Annie had a full head of hair for an infant, so Anna washed and combed it neatly beforehand. Most travelers were still wearing the clothes with which they had begun the journey two weeks earlier. Some mothers put caps on their infants to avoid having the doctors see cradle cap and other skin diseases, but he usually took it off. When Anna appeared before the doctor with Annie, he ran his fingers through the child's hair and smiled. Trachoma was a frequent reason for being detained, but the whole Funk family passed, although about one-fourth of their group didn't. She was thankful. The journey could continue. But

she thought from time to time about her parents, whom she had visited briefly the previous summer, and their pitiful conditions, and her 11 brothers and sisters whom she might never see again, all still caught up in the turmoil that was Mother Russia.

At Riga, the emigrants boarded a reconstructed coal ship, called *The Bruton*. After many days traveling in cramped freight cars, these accommodations were much better. They slept on beds with mattresses and white sheets. The food was plain but abundant, and included white bread, a food eaten in abundance only long ago before the Revolution, and also potatoes and even meat. The stewards took little away from the table after a meal. If a piece of bread was left on the tray, it disappeared into somebody's pocket, because the people were always hungry. The ship followed the German coastline, passing through the Kiel Canal, and then the Holland coastline where the Funk family ancestors had once lived before crossing the Straits of Dover to come upon the high white cliffs and the seagulls following the ship, waiting for garbage to be dumped overboard.

At Calais, France, not far from Dunkirk, the ship docked to load and unload freight before heading for Southampton, England, over a very rough sea, forcing many passengers to take to their beds. Here, a bus took the emigrants to an old remodeled air force hangar, left over from World War I, called Atlantic Park, where they were quartered. The food was great, and older girls in the group helped to clear tables and wash dishes, which pleased those in charge. Anna marveled that the tables were covered with white tablecloths and the food was so plentiful that they could eat four times a day if they wished—bread, meat, tea or coffee, cheese, marmalade. There was no fear of thieves; the building in which their chests and boxes were stored wasn't locked.

In the few days they stayed in Southampton waiting for a ship with room for emigrants, they took short walks, amazed to see a city so clean and neat. Every house had a trimmed hedge and flowerbed. Cyclists rushed past them by the hundreds. No military police with saber and revolver stood at street corners with watchful eyes, only policemen with white gloves and a baton.

The emigrants went shopping if they had money. Some kind soul gave each child a penny, which was a huge fortune. Little Abe promptly lost his, probably because of the holes in his pockets. Some people bought shoes if they were still wearing *schlorre*. Jake spent some of the $10 gift from the AMRA to buy Anna a cotton dress and jumper. She had made a blouse out of a sugar sack before she left Russia. In England,

once again, the whole family passed the medical examination while others were sent to Germany to recuperate.

On July 25, 115 persons, including the Funk family, boarded the *Empress of Scotland*. It had been a German ship named *Queen Auguste Victoria* during the war. Large ships filled vacancies in their passenger list with emigrants, who traveled steerage mostly. Their beds were located in a large room in the hold of the ship where pipes of various kinds and sizes covered parts of the walls and ceiling. Only a thin wall separated the passengers from huge boilers, whose valves hissed and clanged all the time. Part of the room was set up with long tables for eating. Once underway, the big propellers thumped steadily day and night. The waves were high, and one after another the passengers became seasick and longed for land. They ate unaccustomed foods and grew hungry for the familiar rye bread, *borscht* and *kjielkje* with onion gravy, watermelon, and *rollkueaken*. They had freedom to roam the lower deck. High above they could see the first-class passengers in fancy clothes on their promenade deck, but that was out of bounds.

Young Abe became good friends with another boy his age and together they roamed the ship. When the waiter brought food he would say, "C'mon, c'mon," so the boys ran around shouting "C'mon, c'mon," and boasting that they could speak English. One day they dared to climb the stairs to the first-class deck, but a metal fence stopped them, so they stood at the fence and watched the passengers with great interest. A young couple was eating some kind of nuts and tossing the shells onto the deck. When they left, the boys crawled underneath the gate to find out what they had been eating. They found one nut the couple had missed. Each ate half of a peanut!

After seven days at sea, the ship arrived in Quebec, where the ship's doctor immunized them. They were examined by another doctor before being loaded on trains with upholstered seats that made into beds at night. Would wonders never cease? Each car had a washroom and drinking water, a long way from the boxcar they had traveled in at the beginning of their journey. Each person was given a Russian-English Testament.

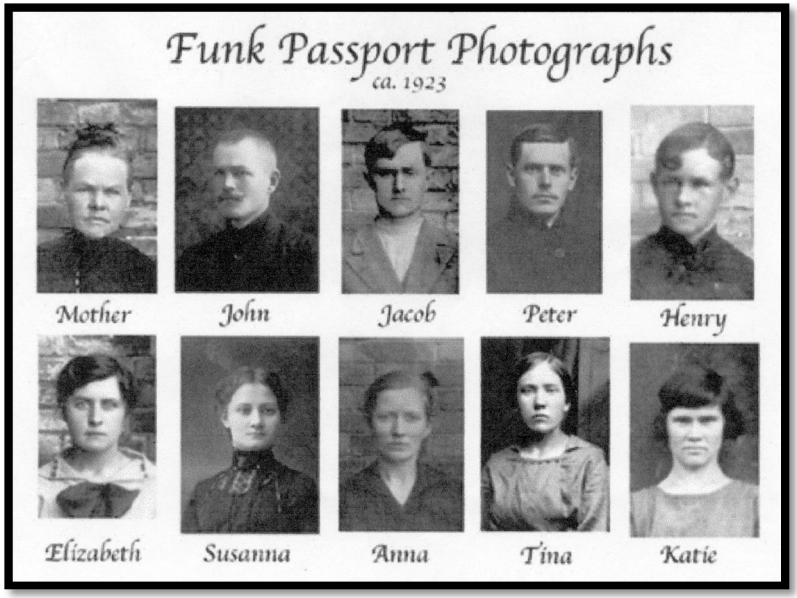
As the train rushed through the country, the passengers watched the woods, small lakes, farmlands, and the flowerbeds at the stations. Everything looked clean, orderly. At night, city streets were flooded with light. And always there was food, lots of it.

While on the train, young Abe rushed off to join a friend he had made who had come into their car shouting loudly, "*En Naeaja, en Naeaja*." They rushed onto the platform to see their first black person

wearing a uniform and a red cap. Abe came back to Jake, perplexed. In school he had learned that Africans were black, but this was Canada, not Africa. What was the man doing here?

At stops along the way, the train disembarked passengers who had sponsors waiting for them. On July 30, Jake and Anna with their four young charges and other emigrants arrived in Rosthern, where a large welcoming party of several hundred people awaited them, having come from far and wide by buggy, grain wagon, and car. An official spokesman greeted them on behalf of the Canadian Mennonites. Jake's brother John stood waiting eagerly, as well as Abram D. Schellenberg, sponsor for not only John and his family, but now also Jake and his family, and then Susanna and her remaining children when they came a few weeks later. The reunion was bittersweet for as yet the family was not complete.

The entire group joined in a hymn, the harmony rising and falling, releasing some of the hurt, tragedy, and renewing hope. A Canadian elder preached, and then the newcomers and the *Kanadier* joined to sing, *Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe*. Men removed their caps; eyes filled with tears. The impossible had been achieved. The strength of the Mennonite community had revealed itself once again.



Funk passport photographs in 1923. The children's pictures are missing. The Katie Dyck pictured here later became the wife of Jacob's younger brother, Henry.

The group arrived on Saturday. The Schellenbergs took them to the tiny village of Hague, where Jake and Anna and their brood slept not on a rope mattress, straw-filled tick, feather bed, or even the hard boards of the train out of Russia, but on strange coils that shifted with their weight all night. It felt as if they were back on a ship. Jake turned his pockets inside out and found their total assets: 25 cents and a debt of $468 to the Canadian Pacific Railway for the trip, to be paid off $10 monthly. Ahead lay almost five years of payments, but he was ready for the challenge.

"How nicely dressed you are," said Mrs. Schellenberg. Anna looked down at her London jumper and sugar-sack blouse before taking it off, not knowing what to think. The new life had begun. Sunday was spent getting reacquainted with these relatives, who by now had established a small retail grocery business. In the afternoon, the men went to look at the local store. Jake admired the different scales and strange procedures. He told his Uncle Abram about his many years of experience clerking and working with wholesale food distribution in the army. Before they left the store, the older man turned to the young man, "Jasch, how would you like to start work tomorrow? Fifteen dollars a week."

Tomorrow? A job tomorrow? Immediate income. He had been hoping to find a farm labor job, for he had heard that crops were good in the area. He could hardly believe his good fortune.

Mrs. Schellenberg, Jake's aunt, served their evening meal from a white tablecloth. Anna looked on in wonderment. Would she ever again serve guests using a tablecloth? Before they went to bed their hosts showed them their children's playhouse outside, well arranged and decorated. Anna could only look on in amazement. The playhouse was better furnished than their last home had been in Rosenthal after the revolutionaries had taken everything.

After three weeks of orientation in Hague with the Schellenbergs, Jake and Anna moved to the tiny village of Laird together with John and his family. Here, each family bought a shack with two rooms for $200, to be paid off $10 monthly. The last 25 cents brought from Russia was spent on a bar of soap. Anna needed soap to bathe the girls and themselves. Canada expected its people to be clean. There was hope of more money coming in next week. Jake had a job he knew he could handle.

"We never thought of going back to Russia, as some did," said Anna years later. "Some immigrants were terribly unhappy, especially those who had been wealthy landowners over there and now had to do ordinary labor." Here, everyone was on the same beginner's level, sometimes working as hired help for established settlers. Unlike in

Russia, where Russian servants ate apart from their German employers, here employers and hired hands all ate together. They faced the prejudice of some *Kanadier* who told them openly, "Go back to Russia. You may be Red Communists, too." A few wouldn't take landed immigrants into their homes, but on the whole, the Canadian Mennonites expended effort and money to make it possible for these newcomers, spiritual brothers and sisters as well as blood relatives, to get a good start in this new country.

Komstborscht

Margaretha Schellenberg will very likely have served her guests a traditional meal of komstborscht. She could make it ahead of time and warm it up when they all arrived in her home. The making of komstborscht, the traditional Russian cabbage soup, is an art, not a science. All ingredients are approximate. Komstborscht never tasted exactly the same every time it was served. Some people insisted it tasted best after it had been warmed up seven times. Komstborscht and pie or perieschkje was a complete meal. Often we children dunked our bread in the soup to better savor the wonderful combination of flavors.

* * * * *

2 pounds soup bone
2 quarts water
1 medium onion, chopped
½ medium sized head of cabbage (chopped)
1 carrot, sliced (optional)
2 medium potatoes, diced
1 bay leaf
1½ tbsp parsley (chopped)
Bunch of dill tied in a bundle
Salt and pepper
½ cup heavy cream
1½ cups tomatoes

Boil soup bone in water for at least 1½ hours. Add more water as it boils away. Skim. Add cabbage, potatoes, onions, dill, parsley, bay leaf, salt, and pepper, and cook gently for another 45 minutes. Lastly, add tomatoes. Add cream if desired before serving.

14

Starting over again in a new land

Susanna Funk left Rosenthal on July 30, 1923, a few weeks after her sons and their families and her two youngest boys began their long journey to Canada. She had hesitated to see Nick and Abe leave without her—but what could she do? That was the way the exit visas had been written by the authorities. She yielded to whatever might happen. With her came Henry, 18, conscription age, and Liese, 20, marriageable age.

In this new land of Canada she was grateful she had six of her seven children near her, with only Peter and his wife having remained in Rosenthal. She had a sister and brother-in-law to welcome her. She said goodbye to the land of her birth, Russia, where she had grown up and enjoyed a happy married life with Johann before his death from typhus. The loss was still bittersweet. Life as a widow lay ahead, not behind. She was 51. She said goodbye to the family life they had enjoyed along the Dnieper. Johann had told her before he died, "When I am dead, don't get married again. You will not be happy." She had several opportunities to remarry but always declined, remembering her husband's words. How she would support herself and her dependent children remained dubious.

After living first in Hague for a few weeks with her sisters, Margaretha (Abram) Schellenberg and Anna (A.J.) Schellenberg, and her brother, John Peters and wife Tina, all of whom had immigrated more than a decade earlier, she spent a few years in Saskatoon, where Henry and Liese went to work to support the family; and Nick and Abe, too young to work, trotted off to school to learn English. Later she settled in Hague, comfortable in a solidly Mennonite community with close relatives nearby. The long, unpainted one-story house with the hollyhocks at the corners and the wooden sidewalk to her door became her home. She and that house became synonymous in my mind. Inside, it resembled a traditional Russian Mennonite home with the bed stacked

high with feather comforters and pillows and a large kitchen range on which to keep the water kettle boiling for *prips* and *tweeback*.

After a few weeks living in Hague with relatives, Jake and John both began working in their uncle's Laird store. A photograph of Schellenberg's store, taken about 1925, shows the employees at the time: Jake Funk, J.B. Fischer, Abe Schellenberg (later Shelly), son of Abram, Liese Funk, and John Funk. All the men are already dressed in Canadian-style clothing with shirts and ties, Russian styles discarded. The window displays show it to be a general store, selling yard goods, millinery, and similar items (see photograph on page 71).

Laird was a small, mostly Mennonite, community in the Saskatchewan River Valley, about 50 miles north of Saskatoon. It was named after David Laird, Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories. The Laird Mennonite Brethren Church, started in 1898, was the first organized MB church in the province under the leadership of Jacob B. Wiens. The meetinghouse was first built in 1899 in the country and later moved to town. The Rosenort Mennonite Church was established in Laird in 1894 by newly arrived Elder Peter Regier from Prussia. The church group grew to include 11 congregations distributed throughout the Rosthern district and had more than 1,400 baptized members. Both denominations were well established in the region.

The Mennonites already living here had several decades of life in Canada behind them when the *Russlaender* arrived. Not all of them, especially the women, spoke English fluently as yet. In a solidly Mennonite community like Laird, it wasn't necessary. Neighbors, storekeepers, ministers, and teachers all spoke German, especially Low German. These *Kanadier* were unconcerned about over-the-ocean church conflicts between Mennonite Brethren, the *Kirchliche* Mennonites, and the *Allianz*. All church records in Ukraine had been destroyed during the Revolution, so that when Jake and Anna arrived in Laird, they had no official church letter to prove their membership in the *Allianz* church. No one asked, and they didn't go into detail why she wasn't an original MB, and that Jake had been excommunicated from the MB church for marrying her, so they were accepted into membership on confession of faith, the way it was done when a church letter was missing. The Laird MB church welcomed the young couple, and also Jake's evangelistic preaching gifts.

Jake's brother Peter, wife Tina, and young son Peter arrived in Canada December 3, 1926, after a lengthy two-month journey. He had been able to sell the Funk windmill so that their travel costs were prepaid, not on credit, as with the other family members. Consequently, he and

Tina weren't burdened with a travel debt like the others, a sensitive topic never discussed freely. Peter was skilled in carpentry, probably learned from his father, and he soon also found work in Saskatoon to support his family. He became involved in establishing the new Mennonite Brethren Church in the city.

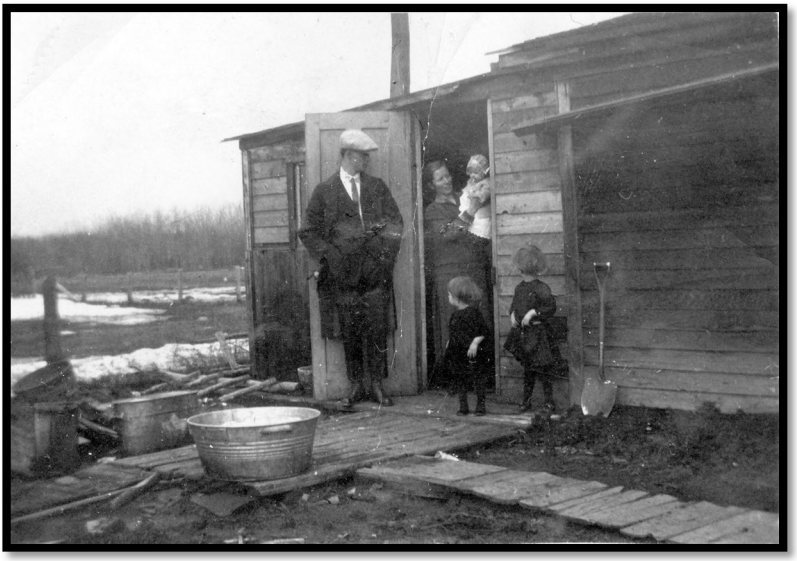
Mother Susanna and children John and Sauna—as they called her to differentiate her from her mother-in-law—and the other children who came with her all attended the Mennonite Church. That two members of the Funk family, Jake and Peter, and their families attended the Mennonite Brethren Church and the others the "other" Mennonite church was never openly discussed. Jake and Peter both had conversion experiences during the war and revolution. They were therefore more openly pious. One branch of the family prayed vocally before meals, the other bowed their heads in silent prayer. The one minority group talked freely about their faith. The other viewed their faith as a private matter. The rift was silent, acknowledged, while family relationships remained warm.

Jake and Anna Funk and their two girls began their new lives in Canada in that tiny two-roomed shack in Laird, staying there for 2½ years (1923–1925), and then moving to Saskatoon in the spring of 1925 for four months, before leaving for Bruno in the fall of 1925. Two of Jake's brothers lived with them in Laird for a while when they all worked for Schellenberg's store, sleeping on the kitchen floor. Before Anna could get into the kitchen to make breakfast, they had to get up and out of the way. Two tiny rooms, six people. No bathroom facilities. Toilet, wood, tub, boiler, water barrel, outhouse—everything was kept outside to leave room inside to turn around. Yet it was the first time in her married life that Anna had her own household to manage. Up until the time they left Russia, she had always lived with her in-laws and then with Jake's widowed mother, and, even here in Laird, with two of Jake's brothers. But now she was in charge, and she loved managing her own home, even if her household was cramped and resources meager. She was the chatelaine, if only of a shack.

Jake and Anna had several fairly well-defined goals in mind: earn enough to support themselves and their growing family, learn to speak English, acquire Canadian citizenship after they had lived in Canada five years, and pay off the burdensome *Reiseschuld* (transportation debt). That huge burden clung to their backs for many years.

Jake was well-assured of a job for the time being with the Schellenberg firm. Abram had been more than generous in his support of his sister-in-law's family, providing employment for each man, even

sister Liese, as they arrived in Canada. The pay was small, but it was something. And it was certain. English classes were being offered to the newcomers in Laird and other immigrant communities. Jake enrolled, working to twist his tongue around the new sounds and strange words and phrases. Anna had no time as yet to acquire English language skills while mastering the multitudinous household tasks in this new country, with winters more intense than those of Ukraine.



The shack by the railway line in Laird, Saskatchewan, which Jacob and Anna Funk bought for their family. That's me in Anna's arms. I was also born in this shack.

They started at once paying down their travel debt of $468, but not all the newcomers were as diligent in liquidating their debts. The sum seemed monstrous to them, and what made it worse was that it was in a strange currency. This *Reiseschuld*, a familiar word in Mennonite households for decades, soon became a huge liability for the entire body of Mennonites who left Russia on credit to the Canadian Pacific Railway and for those concerned Canadian church leaders who had arranged transportation of some 20,000 Mennonites out of Russia at a critical time, between 1923 and 1929. On behalf of the Mennonite body, these men had committed themselves to repaying the debt. It had grown to $1,914,727 on January 1, 1931 and Elder Toews was personally liable. By then the immigrants had paid $884,000, with a balance owing of $1,040,727, a huge sum in those days when wages were paid in cents, not in dollars.

Jake wrote later on: *We came on credit with the CPR* [Canadian Pacific Railway]. *Our trip cost us about $468 for me and Mom, Frieda and Annie. We paid it off $10 monthly. Did we sense problems that the leaders had with regard to immigration? Yes! Some Mennonites in Canada and USA were against it. They sent a telegram to Ottawa not to give us the credit and visas to come* [to Canada in 1923]. *Don't write about it. It is past. The people are dead, let them rest. When we landed in Laird, some Canadian Mennonites hated us, called us "Russians come to take our jobs away." We should be sent back to Russia. We might be Red too, they said to us. Even some relatives hated us. Some very rich people wouldn't take landed immigrants in their houses. First I got sad, but not anymore.*

Some immigrants saw their travel debt as a holy obligation, Jake and Anna among them. They immediately began paying off a little each month. Jake had a horror of debt all his life. He had grown up in a cash economy and intended to keep his personal affairs that way.

In some families, the entire amount that older children earned on farms or as housemaids was handed over to their parents to start payments. If the family had arrived in Canada with six or more children, their debt was immense, almost twice what Jake and Anna's debt was, with not many better opportunities to repay it. Some parents loaded the debt onto each child when he or she began earning money, even if only an infant on arrival in the country. Some children, on being handed their share of the travel expenses, refused to pay, saying it was their parents' obligation. Others were of the opinion that since they were now in Canada, "the CPR can wait." The CPR had more money than they had. Some young men resisted paying the debt of the women they married shortly after arrival in Canada, women who had come across with parents. Some neglected to start paying immediately after coming to Canada, and then during the Depression years couldn't. Some immigrants brushed the debt off with any excuse they could think of. It wasn't their problem now that they were in the new land. "Collect it from me if you can."

The *Reiseschuld*, growing yearly for the Mennonite community, became a spiritual and moral issue between those willing to pay and those who refused. In the 1930s and early 1940s, the latter faced a kind of mass social ostracism by the rest of the group. The Mennonites as a body finally agreed to pay off the debt through collections, offerings, anything to get this heavy burden off their backs and to keep their corporate reputation intact. They appointed debt collectors in each province and urged congregations to work with individuals who refused to pay. The moral standing of the Mennonites in the eyes of government and non-Mennonites as honest, trustworthy people was at stake. It should not be

jeopardized because of those who couldn't see the debt as a personal obligation.

The final debt of $1,947,398.68 was paid in full on November 19, 1946, after years of much work, travel, letter writing, encouragement, negotiating, even coercion. When Elder Toews heard this exciting news, he broke out in uncontrolled weeping. He was already an elderly man and in poor health. A nearly two-million-dollar debt, a monstrous sum that he saw as a personal debt, rolled from his heart. A special service of thanksgiving was held December 1 in Saskatchewan, the last province to pay the debt, as they had been particularly hard hit by the Depression. This liquidation did not mean that individuals did not still owe money for their personal obligations—only that others had paid for them. Any additional money coming in would be used to help new immigrants as the result of World War II.

In early fall of 1924, Anna gave birth to me, their third daughter. She named me Katie after her mother, Katharina Boldt Janzen, and her oldest sister, Katharina, whom she now sensed she might never see again. Anna usually felt good during pregnancy. She felt a kind of energy she otherwise did not have, but this birth was difficult. Miss Wieler, the midwife, came to attend her during labor while Annie and Frieda were whisked away to Grandma Susanna's place in Hague.

Anna remained in bed as usual for a good week after giving birth, but September had always been a busy month, even here in Canada, when preparations had to be made for the unknown winter ahead. On the ninth or tenth day, Jake had brought home some wonderful prune plums from British Columbia that needed canning, so she got up from bed to take care of them. In the middle of her canning, Sauna, John's wife, came to visit from next door. Suddenly Anna felt weak. Something was happening, so she said to Sauna, "Let's go into the bedroom," and collapsed onto the bed, hemorrhaging severely. A frightened Sauna rushed to the store to find a car to bring the midwife. Miss Wieler was almost more upset about nearly losing a patient than she was about the patient. It would damage her reputation as a trustworthy midwife.

Anna was certain she was dying as the blood continued to flow. What would happen to her three small girls, one a newborn? Grandma Susanna in Hague was still young enough to look after Frieda and Annie, but who would want a newborn when most families had enough mouths to feed? One day, two friends from church, a daughter and her mother, visited her. The younger woman had just had a miscarriage. Maybe she would accept the responsibility of a baby? The adoption never happened, for the doctor who treated her managed to scrape her womb, without

anesthetic, and eventually she recovered. But all this meant more expense—for a woman to care for Anna and the doctor's fee. Some new expense always kept cropping up unexpectedly.

Jake wrote: *I got a job in the Schellenberg store in Laird, Sask. I got $15 per week, $60 per month. We bought a shack for $200 on payment terms and paid $10 per month for it, so we lived on $10 per week. You were born in Laird in that shack. We paid the midwife $5. We hired a woman because Mom was sick and paid her $8, so we had to count the pennies. But we made it. Our group paid the travel debt for those who couldn't pay themselves—old, sick, widows.*

A good-sized group of new immigrants settled in the Laird area, including the Jacob Dyck family, who had traveled with Jake and Anna in the same boxcar on the train from Ukraine to Riga. Newcomers were expected to move onto farms as laborers. Under the Homestead Act, new settlers were allowed to move onto a quarter section of land free of charge if, in three years, they would plow the prairie, erect a house and barn, and survive. Once in Canada, some immigrants had the courage to take on homesteads. Others moved to available farms or worked as day laborers.

Soon, other relatives and friends trickled in. Anna's uncle, Rev. Jacob K. Janzen, and his wife Tina, Anna's best friend in Russia, arrived with their family in 1927 after spending several years in Germany, where he was studying theology. They moved to a farm near Laird with an old two-story unpainted frame house and some buildings. Only the advantage of having relatives in business allowed the Funk family members to move into business rather than farm work. John, Jake, and the other brothers were not farmers at heart, and who knows what turn their lives would have taken if they had not had the good fortune to have a far-sighted Abram Schellenberg as benefactor who came in 1912 and started a business at a time when grocery stores were still new to the area. The Funk family gained in coming to Canada, unlike some rich people in Russia who had to work as underlings in Canada.

My father wrote me: *It feels better to look back from good times to hard times or poor times in the past. I saw a man here in Clearbrook working as a clerk in a hardware store—just a clerk. In Russia where I was born his people were the owners of a large factory with many men working for them. I saw him standing, looking sad. His wife was sick. I knew him well from Russia where I worked in his village as a clerk in a co-op store. He was very rich there, now he is poor. He lost everything in Russia. We don't feel the loss as he does because we didn't have much to lose. We gained coming to Canada. That is life.*

The newcomers in Laird gathered in homes Sunday afternoons for *faspa* and to discuss, detail by detail, the harsh experiences of the

revolutionary years and the challenges ahead. Can a person have more than one homeland? It was a question they had never expected to face. Now, still so new to Canada, they sat at memory's table to speak again and again of the good times in the *alte heimat*. When would they quit saying, "In the Old Country we did it this way"? When would the longing to again know that carefree life along the Dnieper leave them? Did they want it to? When would memory of the ruthless slaughter by the Makhnovists and harsh treatment at the hands of the Bolshevists allow them peaceful sleep at night? As yet, it was still too recent. The pain needed telling, again and again, as did what they faced each day. Story after story was repeated Sunday after Sunday, the details enlarged and enhanced as new understandings emerged.

In the new homeland, ordinary people—not just village elders or the wealthy—were chosen as community leaders. In this strange new life, landowners and hired help sat down at the same table and ate the same food. Women didn't wear head coverings. Girls attended high school. Well, they didn't know what to think about that just yet.

They "neighbored" hour after hour about the old life left behind with the beautiful acacia trees, large orchards, and gardens abundant with watermelon and cucumbers. It had been their life. They discussed hopes and plans for the future—to pay off their travel debt quickly and own a piece of real estate in their adopted country. They were all lonely and fearful of the unknown even as they rejoiced to have escaped harsh Russia.

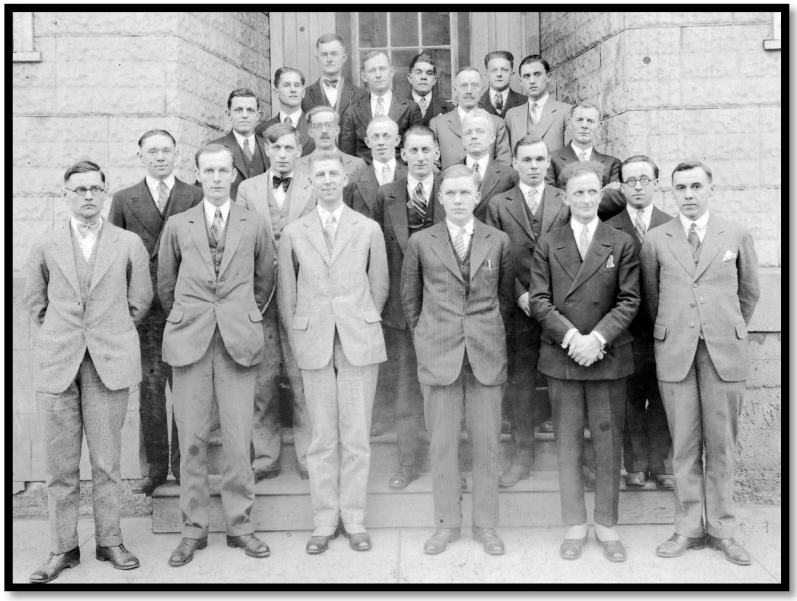
As each family found its bearings and moved elsewhere, the gatherings happened less often. Anna loved friends and missed the gatherings. Often they came to the Funk home, small as a doll's house, where Anna was a warm hostess. John and Sauna's house next door had even less room. "We needed one another then," she said years later, with sadness, reflecting on those early years. As families became established, that need diminished. Jake was among people all day in the store and had less need for conversation than she did in a tiny home filled with wet diapers and young children with numberless needs.

Jake enlarged their two-room house the second year by closing in the L-shaped building to make a larger, rectangular building. Too crowded. They were always stumbling over one another. He also insulated the walls with a mixture of cinders (to keep out the mice) and sawdust, for the winters were much colder than in Ukraine.

In the summer of 1925, the Laird store was sold, and Abram opened a wholesale grocery business in a large brick building in Saskatoon. John and Sauna and Jake and Anna and their families moved to Saskatoon,

living on the second story of the same building. Each evening, Anna had to haul the wicker baby buggy up the stairs so little Katie had a place to sleep. On Sundays she and Jake took all three girls house-hunting. Their housing arrangement was still far from ideal.

Meanwhile, Abram Schellenberg, their gracious benefactor, was plotting his strategy for starting a chain of grocery stores in western Canada. The photograph below of his employees during this time shows 24 men in front of the wholesale building. Among them are Abram and three sons, as well as Jake Funk in vest, suit coat, and tie. Most of the others are of Mennonite ethnicity. By the fall of 1925, Abram had his next plan figured out. He would start a store in Bruno, Saskatchewan, a solidly German community, where Jake would fit in.



Central Wholesale in Saskatoon and the employees of the OK Economy chain of grocery stores (1924–1925). My father, Jacob Funk, is the tallest man in the back row, far left. The older man with moustache, three over from Jacob, is the owner, Abram D. Schellenberg.

Jake and Anna Funk and their three girls moved again, this time to Bruno, in the fall of 1925 into a red brick home with a verandah, giving Anna room to expand a little. It was situated across from the Ursuline Sisters Convent, a boarding school for girls in this very Catholic German community. The community had a Catholic church and a Lutheran church but not a Mennonite Brethren one.

Here, in Bruno, Jake managed one of the first OK Economy stores in his uncle's expansion. Abram recognized the vast potential in a wholesale business such as his for meeting the grocery needs of the growing numbers of new settlers in the many small Saskatchewan communities. He also saw employment potential in the young Mennonite men coming into the country, bringing with them a good work and moral ethic. He liked such men. In Jake, Uncle Abram had found a cheerful, reliable, and aggressive employee, willing to work to make a business succeed. People liked him, and he liked people. He came with several years of clerking experience behind him. Jake, not yet thirty, was fluent in German and Russian but his English skills were still rusty. Living in the solidly Mennonite community of Laird hadn't helped. But that lack should improve with time. The older man had great hopes for his nephew Jake.

Anna was pregnant at the time of the move from Saskatoon. Jacob (Jakie) was born at home on February 26, 1927, a cold winter night, and became Jake's pride and joy. Three girls and now, finally, a boy, a son to carry on his name. The first thing he did when he came home from the store in the evening was to look at the sleeping infant in the carriage.

Anna was desperately lonely in Bruno. She admitted it to me years later. She knew no one and few people recognized the loneliness of this immigrant woman, burdened with four young children, all under the age of six. Her English skills were almost nonexistent for she had no one to learn from.

Once she had gone to the store for some item she needed in a hurry, her children in tow. Jake introduced her to a woman customer and her marriageable daughter who had been shopping at the new OK Economy store regularly. The woman never returned. Jake heard through the grapevine that she had been hoping her daughter would marry this handsome, friendly young man who had moved into the village. She thought he was single, and was shocked to find out he was married with four small children.

Anna was still anemic from my birth, having lost considerable blood. She did what she could to build up her strength. People at the time reached for whatever home remedies were available. She made some dandelion wine at a neighbor's suggestion that it would give her strength. One day she offered some to the woman who came to help after Jakie was born. Its potency was more than Anna had expected, for it made the woman gloriously happy all day long. Anna decided against making more wine.

After Jakie was born, in an attempt to deal with her aching loneliness for her family left behind in Russia, Anna often bundled up the three girls and the baby. The girls always wore red or black stockings over long underwear and pinafore-type aprons over simple dresses to lessen laundry burdens. "*Wo wollen wir jetzt gehen*?" (Where shall we go now?) Frieda's response was always, "*Jesus Christus*." She meant the Lutheran cemetery where Christ hung on the cross. At the cemetery, Frieda would stand and stare a long time before it was time to return home.

The Schwinghammer grocery store, in business for a long time in Bruno, was owned by a well-established businessman who immediately saw the new OK Economy store and its personable manager as a serious threat. When the new store opened, although Mr. Schwinghammer was about to go on vacation, he announced he would not go until he had seen the new store go out of business. He never went on that vacation. Jake had his own method of staying in the competition. His motto was "Live by your wits." "Don't complain about the game. Instead learn the game and play it better." His mother had taught him well about getting along in the world. He hadn't worked in several stores in the Mennonite villages without learning something about business and people: You always kept the customer happy. The customer was always right, even if he was wrong.

Once, he had bought a large supply of farm butter at a high price and then realized he would lose money shipping it to the Saskatoon warehouse. So he asked a friend to take the butter to his competitor and buy sugar in exchange. After Schwinghammer had bought all Jake's high-priced butter, a customer leaked the word: He had bought his competitor's high-priced product. Understandably, he was upset. *All's fair in love and business* was the rule of the day.

Jake's competition was fighting for his economic well-being. He had his own ways of getting back at his rival. Schwinghammer always paid more than Jake for produce he took in trade from the area's many farming families, so farm customers were attracted to his store. If Jake placed a sale announcement in the store window for a product, the other man immediately lowered his price. He sent his friends to Jake's store to find out his prices, and then always made his own cheaper, even if he only had one box of prune plums in stock. Consequently, to stay competitive sometimes Jake lowered his prices on a large supply and took the loss. Customers always went where the prices were lowest. Store loyalty was unknown.

Gradually Jake learned to know the people of the community and their personal stories. Bruno wasn't much different from Rosenthal in that people liked to come to the store to stand and visit. Bit by bit, Jake would hear all parts of a story to share with Anna later on, like an installment series.

In 1926, Anna's brother and wife, Jake and Lena Janzen, arrived from Ukraine and stayed with Jake and Anna in Bruno for a short while. After nearly seven years in the army, this Jake had become a firm believer in Jesus Christ and had joined the Mennonite Brethren Church. He and Lena Friesen were married and within a few months migrated with her parents and siblings to Canada. It was exciting to get first-hand news about Anna's parents, who still lived in the Sagradowka area. Conditions hadn't improved much. Jake and Anna had little money to send them, barely making enough to keep things going, what with the burden of the *Reiseschuld*.

The store closed in the evening only after the last customer had left, which sometimes meant that supper was late, a custom that continued for decades. The store always came first, family second. Anna and Lena and the children waited for the two Jakes to come home. Waiting was wearisome, especially for the hungry little ones, so Lena sometimes took the three girls into their bedroom at twilight, into the darkness (only one lamp in the house), and there, with Katie on her lap, Annie close by on a stool, and Frieda on an apple box at her knees, she would sing with them. They always started with the favorite *Gott ist die Liebe*, and then moved on to other songs the girls knew by heart.

Living isolated from relatives and the rest of the Mennonite community required a car, so Jake gladly bought a black, shiny Model T Ford with a canvas top that flapped in the wind. The windows could be rolled down to let the passengers enjoy the breeze, the dust, and the insects. Over the decades, Jake was very possessive of his cars. Before he left for work in the morning, he opened the garage door to view his acquisition, check the oil and tires, and wipe a few specks of dust from the hood. Saturdays he filled it with gas in case a Sunday trip was planned. He never let the children or anyone else drive it. In cold Saskatchewan, the car was put on blocks for the winter and the battery removed. He once offered to teach Anna to drive, but with four children in the back seat, that did not work out. She became the back-seat driver sitting in the front seat, watching, warning, and keeping the children in check.

While in Bruno, they heard that Anna's and Jake's cousin John Janzen had come from Russia to one of the Mennonite communities to the south, and they decided to visit the newly-arrived family one Sunday.

They arrived just as everyone was about to go to church, so Jake and John Janzen went to church while Anna and the children stayed with the wife. They had a great time visiting about friends and relatives left behind in Russia. Jake and the husband returned, but had nothing to talk about. After a simple meal, Anna and Jake returned home. Jake always had difficulty connecting with people whom he thought his superiors. His lack of education beyond grade school was still a source of embarrassment.

Another time, they stopped off at another OK Economy manager's home. There were more of these stores popping up all the time, often with Mennonite immigrant men as managers, weak in English language skills but strong in personal work ethic and ambitions. Jake and the manager compared ways of luring and keeping customers in a new land and of selling particular products—or why some items didn't sell. Sometimes those conversations got very loud and lively. This was exciting stuff, much like men discussing football today. Now Jake had lots to talk about. He was in his element if he could talk shop with people who knew what he was talking about, and where he could show off his managerial achievements.

Jake finally asked for a transfer to a less-Catholic town, so that Frieda, already beyond school age, and Annie, soon ready to start school, could attend a regular public school instead of a convent. The OK Economy company was opening a store in Blaine Lake, a solidly Slavic community. Jake seemed natural for this place because he was familiar with the language and people.

At the time, Jake and Anna did not suspect what a rich cultural heritage they would give their children by living in Blaine Lake, with its multi-ethnic population. There was at least one family of nearly every culture living there—Chinese, Jewish, Scottish, British, German, Slavic, Métis, and many more. It was a community without traditions or precedents. The culture was evolving as the village grew in size and variety of people, each in their own way adding to that culture. We Funk children benefited from living with this broad spectrum of cultures in ways we would not have experienced had we lived in a strongly Mennonite settlement across the river. Jake contributed his strong work ethic and leadership skills, empathy for the Slavic and any downtrodden people, and high moral and spiritual outlook on life; Anna, despite her halting English, would soon be known for her above-average baking and knitting skills and love of conversation, and the children, one by one, for their academic achievements and latent leadership skills.

In the extended Funk family, after having spent several years learning to know the new country, Jake's younger brothers and sister living across the river were ready to embark on their own lives as they found suitable life companions: Elizabeth (Liese) married Abram John Friesen on June 26, 1927; Heinrich (Henry) married Katharina George Dyck on July 27, 1930; Nickolai married Katherina Isaak Dyck on July 12, 1934; Abram married Kay Janzen in August 1939 in London, Ontario. Grandmother Susanna Peters Funk was now truly alone, yet content in her little house in Hague. Her extended family was growing, with grandchildren being added with unsurprising regularity as had been the custom in Russia.

Riebelplauts

Crumb cake and Mother were almost synonymous. Until she braved making modern Canadian cakes like Devil's Food (even the name was so brazen we hardly dared say it out loud) and Lord or Lady Baltimore cakes, which meant following a recipe, crumb cake was our treat on Saturday and Sunday evening suppers. Mother often made a huge batch of rolls, saving some of the yeast dough for this favorite. In some homes, plauts and coffee constituted the whole meal, usually a faspa.

* * * * *

1 cup milk, scalded
¼ cup butter
½ cup sugar
½ tsp salt
1 package active dry yeast
1 tsp sugar
¼ cup lukewarm water
1 egg
3¾ to 4 cups bread flour

Crumb topping:
½ cup flour
½ cup sugar
½ tsp salt
3 tbsp butter
Rub with fingers until crumbly.

Heat milk, butter, ½ cup sugar, and salt over medium heat until warm. Dissolve yeast and 1 tsp sugar in water until bubbly. Beat egg in mixing bowl. Add yeast and milk mixture to egg. Gradually add about 3 cups flour and beat vigorously. Gradually add enough of remaining flour to make a dough that is not sticky.

Turn onto lightly floured board and knead about 5 minutes, until smooth and elastic. Place in a well-oiled bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Set in a warm place to rise, about 1½ hours.

Divide dough into three equal pieces and pat into greased 9 inch cake pans. Cover lightly and let dough rise about 30 minutes. Cover with crumb topping. When fruit is in season, place a layer of plums, apricots or berries on dough under the crumb topping. Bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes, longer if using fruit.

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Home again among Russians

In the spring of 1928, not quite 15 years after the settlement had begun, Jake Funk opened the new red brick store on a prominent corner of Main Street in Blaine Lake. It had high steps leading to the front door and a bright red-and-white sign above it that read "OK Economy Store." In front, he placed two benches, which soon found ready takers in older Doukhobor and Russian men who loved to wander downtown to sit and visit in the sunshine, cracking sunflower seeds. In winter, they gathered around the floor furnace and enjoyed its steady warmth and their own conversation. Jake recognized the value of a social as well as business presence in the community. In his tan-colored smock or apron, with vigor in his step, he would carry many a sack of flour or sugar on his shoulder out the door and down the steps to the waiting wagon or truck. Service meant sales, and Jake was all about sales and keeping the Blaine Lake store thriving. Eventually, even though it was a company-owned store, the community recognized it as Funk's store. It had the imprint of his personality on it.

The village itself was started in about 1911 on the railroad between Prince Albert and North Battleford. After the first settlers arrived, the First Nations people were moved onto a reserve to the north. We called them Indians at the time. A quick drive through their reserve allowed us a chance to stare openly at the squalid shacks and the young boys riding on horses. It was clear to us children that on the surface we had little in common with the indigenous people, but we wondered if there was more.

No one is sure how the village of Blaine Lake was named, although there are many unproven theories. The one most generally accepted is that it was named after a surveyor who drowned in the alkaline body of water "about a mile and a half westerly."

The largest single group to settle at one time in the area were the Doukhobors, a Slavic group exiled several times by the Tsarist government in Russia to more and more remote regions because of their religious beliefs and conscientious objection to military service. Doukhobors and Mennonites were often mentioned in one sentence during World War II, each holding to their version of conscientious objection. In 1898, Leo Tolstoy and the Quakers in England and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, prevailed upon the Tsarist regime to allow the Doukhobors to leave Russia. After much deliberation with the Canadian government, several thousand settled in various parts of Saskatchewan, including the area near Blaine Lake, particularly Petrofka village near the North Saskatchewan River. They had heard about the success of Mennonites in settling in Canada.

The first years, they lived in caves dug into the river banks to survive the winter. They baked bread in outside clay ovens. In summer, one kind of wild fruit after another was available for the picking and drying: saskatoons, strawberries, raspberries, chokecherries, pin cherries, gooseberries, buffalo berries, and currants. Other edibles were wild rhubarb, hazelnuts, and mushrooms. In spring, lacking farm animals and with the men working elsewhere, the women hitched themselves to the plow to begin farming operations. Decades later, the Doukhobors were accused of using women as beasts of burden, but the women insisted they had voluntarily accepted this task to survive.

The Doukhobors supported a "living book," or oral tradition, rather than the Bible. They opposed taking an oath and rejected the legal system in favor of individual judgment and subjective consciousness. Doukhobor means "spirit wrestler," a derogatory term at first, but which they adapted to mean wrestling for truth. Their symbols of life were bread, salt, and water on the table. They avoided the use of meat, for life was in animals, the gift of God. They refused military service of any kind in Canada, which meant their young men spent time in prison during World War II.

In Russia they had no sexual intercourse for a period so no children would be born during the time of persecution. In Canada, the most extreme group refused to register births, deaths, and marriages, as well as their homesteads, which meant that, later on, some lost their property.

For years, local villagers became aware of the Doukhobors' commemoration of the Burning of Arms Day on June 29 and 30, St. Peter's and St. Paul's day. It was the anniversary of the date in Russia when their leader Peter Vasilwich Veregin (Peter Lordly) decreed that every rifle, saber, sword, and weapon of any kind be burned. This mass

burning of arms was a renunciation of militarism and an act of defiance against the brutal Cossacks. On this day, the Doukhobors in Blaine Lake gathered by the hundreds in an outdoor celebration to listen to speeches by community elders and sing mournful chants. Lunch was huge slices of red, juicy watermelon and *perieschkje*. Jake loved attending these gatherings and rubbing shoulders with his Slavic brethren; sometimes he took us children with him. Doukhobors lived on all sides of our home for many years and became part of the ethnic mosaic that was Blaine Lake.

A reenactment by Doukhobor women in 1939 of how they hitched themselves willingly to a plow to till the soil in the absence of their husbands in the late 1800s. Photograph courtesy of the Saskatoon Star Phoenix. Used with permission.

Their women were invariably amply endowed, soft and floppy (bras were unknown), and wore tent-sized skirts in brilliant colors. The blouses, gathered at the neck with long sleeves, were covered with an apron and head shawl, often of cashmere, beautifully embroidered by hand with pink roses, and with a silk fringe. Being vegetarians, the Doukhobors loved to cook with lots of cream and butter, and it showed. Their pastries were deliciously satisfying.

Like many religious groups, the Doukhobors also had a radical branch, the Sons of Freedom. This group voiced its objections to such matters as compulsory education for their children by stripping in public

and daring the police to arrest them as they stood nearly naked before them. They burned about 25 schoolhouses between 1929 and 1932 in Saskatchewan, including the Blaine Lake area, before moving to British Columbia, where they kept up their protests. These parades started in the spring of 1903 "to show nature to humanity" and to persuade others to resist the temptations of materialism in this world. They were not viewed as protests but encouragement to join their way of life. A short, naked 300-pound woman would truly have been a revelation of nature.

Because the Sons of Freedom were accused of setting fires to schools in the Blaine Lake area, insurance companies were reluctant to insure schools where Doukhobors had settlements. Blaine Lake children yearned someday to see a parade of Sons of Freedom in their naked splendor, but it never happened while I lived there. All our Doukhobor friends and neighbors remained discreetly clothed.

The Doukhobors were followed to the Blaine Lake area by French settlers from Brittany and Quebec. Close on their heels came English-speaking immigrants from Ontario, Great Britain, and the United States. The hills to the southwest were settled by Ukrainian immigrants and others. All were looking for homesteads or work as day laborers. The result was a very eclectic group of residents, with the "English" in control. Later, as immigrants learned the language and the ways of the new country and became educated, they moved into leadership positions. Being the only Mennonite family in the community meant we Funks were not consigned to any ethnic group, but found friends in many.

The original Blaine Lake site was the William R. "Scotty" Johnson homestead, which he later sold to the Canadian Northern Railway. In 1912 and 1913, the village grew from about 100 to nearly 300 people, with all the necessary services and institutions soon in place. It boasted several stores, elevators, and residences, and a post office, bank, flour mill, garage, and lumber yard.

On occasion, in the early days, as many as 200 yoke of oxen were seen in Blaine Lake on one day, reports one historian. Saturday nights were special, and that continued to be the case 15 years later when Jake managed the OK Economy store, for stores and other businesses stayed open until 11 p.m. to allow members of the farming community to conduct business after chores were done. It was also a time for socializing at the dance hall, theater, and beer parlors. It was not unusual for Jake to finally lock the door after 1 a.m. and head the short half-block home, where Anna would be waiting.

The year 1928 brought a bumper crop to the area. The three western provinces were almost completely dependent on the export of wheat,

and Blaine Lake, with its six elevators, was a throbbing hub of activity in fall. Jake's amazing $1,000 annual bonus in the spring of 1929 paid for a new, larger house. Each child participated in the windfall and received something like $1.

Life looked rosy for Jake and Anna in the new land. Canada had been a good choice, but life still was not easy. Several times, Anna and the two youngest children, Jakie, a toddler, clutching his mother's skirts, and I, now age five, went to inspect this new house, standing mutely, unpainted, unfinished, almost shamefacedly, daring someone to choose and love it. Next door stood a high two-story building covered with corrugated tin where the Zarchikoffs lived. Across the street lived the Padavilnikoffs, next door the Zbitnoffs. Anna examined the possibilities in each room and swept out the cobwebs and dust. The first house Jake and Anna had purchased was too cramped, what with another baby expected in spring.

This one-and-a-half story house, a mere half-block from the store, soon had paint covering each inch of its simple frame structure. The outside was always cream-colored with green trim. Anna, in particular, believed paint covered a multitude of failings. The front door had a leaded glass panel across the top and bottom, but in winter it was nailed shut and covered with corrugated cardboard to keep out the icy blasts. If there had been a fire in the kitchen, the family might not have survived. Hop vines straggled up the twine strung up and down the front verandah.

Jake and Anna had one small bedroom on the second floor, which, in winter, with all the children, also housed the all-essential indoor toilet. Jakie, as the only boy, was privileged to have his own bedroom, painted a strong masculine robin's egg blue. We four girls owned the "large" bedroom, which held two white iron coil-spring double beds, a dresser with a mottled mirror and a drawer for each girl, several chairs, and a family closet. It was calcimined in pink. The beds creaked as the sleepers turned in their beds, despite Anna's efforts to muffle the sound with rags wrapped around the corners of the complaining springs.

In winter, the nails in the siding popped like a machine gun. Sometimes the wind howled around the corners with brutal force. The upstairs was heated by means of registers and a pipe, gilded with aluminum paint, which arched up from the downstairs heater through a small opening in the hallway. The register in the girls' room was great for eavesdropping on adult conversation in the living room below. The best stories were always told after the children's bedtime. When Frieda told stories at night before going to sleep, Jakie crawled into bed with us.

The small central hallway ended in a tiny closet for the clothing for all seven family members. Each person had only one extra set of clothing, so it was never very full. A small linen closet occupied a corner of our room. It was a wonderful house, small in size but full of dreams and good memories.

Later on, when Jake bought a car, he had a garage built on the same small lot, with a lean-to shed we children used as a playhouse. We also enjoyed a teeter-totter, a sandbox, and a swing—and the company of the neighborhood children who often joined us. I only realized in later life how concerned my father was that we children have lots of play equipment. A garden completed the backyard. Raspberry bushes overhung the fence on one side, and the ripening berries were free game for whoever got to them first. Much later, Jake had an old building hauled to the backyard to be rebuilt into a sauna, a Russian luxury he couldn't live without.

Jake had an easy rapport with the Slavic people. His spirit identified with them and he spoke their language, so the customers enjoyed coming to a store where they could discuss grocery needs in their own language. They wanted *khleb*, not bread, and *massla*, not butter. He always felt a close kinship with the Slavic people, one he hadn't experienced with the Mennonites in Laird. They trusted him and he trusted them. Many were illiterate, so then each man signed his name with an "X" in an awkward handwriting with my father's signature beneath it as witness. They knew he would not let them sign anything irregular or illegal. Jake was their friend.

But Blaine Lake also held other nationalities besides the Slavs, especially a large group originating in Europe and the British Isles. Jake observed a careful deference to the "English," who appreciated his readiness to give good service, even if his language was not perfect. He was soon recognized as an honest, upright businessman, never out to defraud the customer.

On the grand opening day of the store in 1928, Jake announced a "special" on peanuts. People came from far and wide to investigate the new business and to buy peanuts. Jake took orders and Anna's brother, Jake Janzen, who had also moved to Blaine Lake from Bruno, weighed the peanuts. By the end of that Friday, they had sold all the peanuts and there was still Saturday to go. A phone call went into Central Wholesale in Saskatoon to send out more peanuts. "What? All the peanuts sold?" The two Jakes had done it.

Sometime thereafter Jake and Lena Janzen and family moved to B.C. to strike out on their own and be closer to her relatives.

Jake's amazing business success was the downfall of the Safeway store down the street, which went bankrupt in 1937. Jake purchased all the leftover stock, which his clerk and we daughters had to check carefully and count. Much of it was stale, having sat on the shelves for months. Some products, like chocolate bars with nuts, were bug-infested, so we examined each one, chiseled off the bad parts and ate the hard candy core. Those weeks might have been called the Days of Cans and Candy. We stuffed ourselves with odds and ends of candy without restraint.

In those early years, Jake learned new methods of doing business in a thriving immigrant town. Farm families bought in quantity for the whole week, sometimes cases of canned salmon, pork and beans, corn, and other items at a time when there was no refrigeration. Salmon, pilchards or mackerel, and also sausage were popular items with the vegetarian Doukhobors. Sausage somehow slipped into this category. A Doukhobor wedding meant a huge order of these products. Jake often whistled as he filled these large orders.

Jake also ordered apples and other fruit from the Okanagan Valley, and flour and sugar by the railway boxcar load. The day the car was shunted onto a siding near the village was a big day for Jake and his helpers. He did a lot of advertising beforehand, sometimes sending out a general phone call so the farmers knew when the fruit would arrive in town. Samples of apples fresh from the orchards were available to one and all. He sold the apples or flour right out of the boxcar to the farmers waiting with their wagons to load a winter's supply. His big floor scale had been hauled to the siding to weigh the produce. The rich, heady aroma of a large boxcar of loose, red McIntosh apples bedded down on a layer of straw, and the abundant good humor of Jake and his helpers overcame the resistance of any reluctant buyer. His salary now was $25 a week. The *Reiseschuld* was being whittled down.

Already in Bruno, while working at the store there, and now in Blaine Lake, Jake faced one of several cultural hurdles—banking the Canadian way. In Russia, during the war and revolutionary years, the economic system had crashed. The former Russian ruble was worthless. Inflation was sky-high and any money people had was carefully hidden; valuables were buried in the ground to protect them from bandits. Trust in financial institutions in a time of unstable economic conditions and unfamiliar government was nonexistent due to fear of embezzlement and thievery.

Being a manager instead of a clerk meant Jake had to deposit receipts in the bank and write checks for expenditures. He acceded to

this arrangement for the store but never felt comfortable depositing his own personal funds in a bank, where he couldn't physically put his hands on them. His distrust of financial institutions was too strong. His lifelong personal motto was cash and carry, whether it was for a refrigerator purchase or an ice cream cone. It wasn't out of the ordinary for him to pin a wad of bills into a pants pocket. He did not feel comfortable unless he had cash with him.

The stately Canadian Bank of Commerce's Blaine Lake branch stood diagonally across the street from the OK Economy store (now called the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce). In the first years, the tellers, always men, stood in cages to protect them from the public. Early records were entered into a ledger using a straight pen and ink to keep track of deposits, withdrawals, and balances. Calculations were done without mechanical assistance. All of this changed with the times. Jake always had an adding machine sitting on the store counter, but he was equally skilled at adding up columns of figures in his head. If he was too busy to go to the bank himself, he sent us children with a deposit slip, cash, and checks, a scary experience, at least for me, as I entered the dark, high-ceilinged building with its hushed atmosphere to silently hand the deposit slip and cash or checks to the teller. This was deadly serious stuff.

Jake faced another challenge: knowing what to do with store receipts after the bank had closed for the day. He did not like to take large amounts of money home and make it the target of would-be robbers, so he devised his own method to deceive them. The till drawer was always left open overnight with a few coins in it so burglars would not break it open. Bills and checks were counted and transferred to a small cigar box, which, after he had pulled all the blinds, he hid on a shelf behind the Oxydol or Rinso or in a little cubbyhole under the window shelf. He never left without first checking the back door, then walking out the front door and locking it, checking it twice, and heading for home. This might not be revolutionary Russia, but old habits are hard to break. To this day I do the same.

The Canadian postal system was easier to adapt to. With the arrival of the railway to the villages of Marcelin and Blaine Lake, mail was dispatched by train. One day, the train pulled into town from Saskatoon and Prince Albert and went on to North Battleford. The next day, it reversed the trip. Each time it brought bags of mail for the 300 or so villagers. In the early years, a local man delivered the bags of mail to the post office with a wheelbarrow. Later on, the postmaster waited with his small wooden handcart, as did the drayman with his horse-pulled flatbed on wheels or sleigh runners. Each man claimed what was designated as

his and delivered it either to the simple building off Main Street where the postmistress sorted it into the labeled boxes or to local stores.

We Funk children all knew the combination to Box 26—right to 13, back to 8. Either Jake went for the mail or one of us collected it on the way home from school to bring Jake his business mail and Anna the rest. She particularly looked forward to receiving German papers. Occasionally, there was a letter, often a newspaper or a catalog. If the box remained empty, one could contemplate what might have come.

The daily coming of the train remained a big event in the life of the villagers for decades, with dozens of people heading to the station just to see who had come and who was leaving. It was a necessary daily activity, like going to the outhouse. You went because you had to. The station agent always kept the outside schedule board updated so no one had to ask "How late is the train today?" A local café owner brought lunches for passengers to the station on the days it was headed to Prince Albert.

If you missed going to the station to find out the latest news, *The Blaine Lake Echo*, housed in a two-story, unpainted, frame box-like structure across the alley from the Funk house, listed names of visitors in town or elsewhere. Type was set by hand and printed on a rotary press. *The Echo* recorded everything of interest and non-interest to its readers—weddings, births, deaths, sports news, columns, and trivia. Each July, the results of the provincial examinations for grades eight and high school were published. Students waited for this issue eagerly. Had they passed? It was all there, even the failures, for everyone, including your neighbors, to see.

A regular task for Jake was making the weekly grocery order, which a local trucking service delivered during the summer. In winter, it came by train. When Paul Dutchak and his huge truck arrived, often in the early evening, Jake rushed to the store to carry in the boxes and bags of products, which he and his clerk John Nesdoly and we children shelved the next day.

When Jake was naturalized in the fall of 1928, five years after coming to Canada, his first major goal had been reached. He was fearful the judge in Leask would ask him questions he didn't know. He had gone to night school in Laird to learn English, but it was a difficult language to master and that was a long time ago. In the courthouse, the judge asked him, "Jacob Funk. Is that your name?"

"Yes."

"Are you Russian?"

"No, I am Mennonite."

"You were born in Russia, therefore you are Russian," replied the judge before changing the subject. "How are the roads?"

Satisfied that Jake knew enough English to pass the test, the judge gave Jake naturalization papers for himself, Anna, Frieda, and Annie, who knew no English. With Frieda now attending an English school, Anna grasped the opportunity to learn English and possibly free herself from her isolation. She had borne five children in nine years. Her health was not always good. But she had a yearning for knowledge and to interact with people. During the early years, her favorite readings were *Die Mennonitische Rundschau* and *Der Bote*, both German-language newspapers with news from all parts of the Mennonite world, including Russia. It was her sole contact with the outside world.

When Anna and Jacob Funk left Rosenthal in 1923, Anna never knew whether she would see her parents, Franz and Katharina, again. Her father was reluctant to leave Ukraine. He had many excuses, one being that he would probably not pass the medical exam because he had a hernia. Many Mennonites like him, despite the difficult hardships they had just gone through, were convinced that now that the Revolution was over and a new regime was in place, times would improve in Ukraine. He wasn't quite convinced that the danger of being scalped by Indians was over on the Saskatchewan prairies. He had read too many novels about the great American west.

Anna always spoke about a special bond between her and her father. But that special tie was getting weaker through prolonged absence. In Canada, Anna had no father or mother to share her joy or pain. She had no close friend to converse with in Low German, that precious language of intimacy. No church friends to turn to, especially in winter, to share her homesickness for familiar faces. The isolation and loneliness of the immigrant mother of young children has not been adequately acknowledged, even today.

In late October 1928, Anna woke with a start to see her thin, dark-haired mother with the pock marks on her face standing at the head of the bed in front of her. "How did you get here? Why didn't you write to tell me you were coming?" she burst out, overjoyed to see her mother, whom she had not seen in five years. "I came to say goodbye," her mother replied. Anna jumped out of bed to hug her mother but she vanished. It was only a dream. Anna kept track of the date of her vivid dream.

A good month later, a letter edged in black arrived at the Blaine Lake post office from Russia from Anna's father. It told her that her mother had died October 30, 1928, about the time of the unexpected

vision (see photograph on page 123). Jake brought it home from the store without waiting until evening, when he usually brought the mail. She read the letter and wept silently over the loss of her mother, whose life had been only hardship, even in her last days. The letter spoke of a lack of medical attention, food, and decent housing. Even little Jakie, then about two, recalls getting out of bed, coming down the stairs to see his mother crying, and trying to comfort her. She was holding a letter edged in black. The radio was playing a Mexican song and, forever thereafter, when he heard that distinctive harmony he recalled the moment he heard her crying.

Had her mother come in the dream to forewarn her about her death? She secretly cherished this visit from her mother's spirit. When she told me and my sister Anne about it decades later, her face lit up with a rush of joy at the wonderful memory, even as her eyes glistened at her loss. She couldn't explain the dream, but saw it as a gift for difficult times. Anna added that loss to her many others. She would probably never again see her many siblings left behind. Her bond with Russia was getting weaker with each year in the new country. But the hurt remained steady like a toothache in the heart.

Perieschkje

The Doukhobors made these fruit-filled pastries large and flat, almost the size of a man's hand, and served them with cream. Mother made them much smaller and fuller so we never stopped with eating just one.

* * * * *

½ cup lard
2 cups flour
1 egg
2 tsp baking powder
1/3 cup milk (approximately)
1 tsp salt

Cut shortening into flour and baking powder. Form a well and add the egg and milk. Form a soft dough. Roll out thin and cut into 3 inch squares. On each square, place some cut apples and about a tsp of sugar. You may substitute cherries, gooseberries, apricots, rhubarb, or blueberries for the apples. Gather the four corners together and seal the sides so that juice will not run out. Bake at 425 degrees until nicely brown.

16

Before and after the Big Fire

In Laird, Jake had earned $15 a week; in Bruno, $20; and in Blaine Lake, $25, which was later raised to $30. From this, he made regular payments on their travel debt. Despite the upturn in financial circumstances, the first years in Blaine Lake were fraught with one hurdle after another, the type Jake and Anna had not experienced in Rosenthal. Even their marriage was challenged in the new culture. Anna had worked outside her parental home from age 15 until her marriage at 25, giving her a measure of self-confidence and independence as a woman in a male-dominated society. Jake was also an independent sort. Anna had no one with whom to share her burdens—marriage, child-raising, her dearth of friends, and household concerns—because her English language skills were minimal. She thrived on interaction with people and invigorating conversation about ideas, but was hampered by family responsibilities and ignorance of the new country's customs.

The loneliness of the Bruno days continued, for Jake was busier than ever in the store, enjoying it immensely, while she was home alone with four children under the age of eight. She longed for people of her own kind. She was overworked, with too many children to care for who were too young to help. She had to melt snow for water on top of the stove to do laundry. First laundry was boiled, then washed, and finally hung on a rack and allowed to freeze outside, then brought inside to finish drying. Diapers and the fleece-lined long underwear that Jake and the children wore always hung in the kitchen. Fires had to be maintained all day in the two stoves, one in the kitchen and the other in the living room, to keep the bitter cold at bay. It was much colder in Saskatchewan than it had been in Ukraine. The sheer drudgery of backbreaking housework, especially for someone who valued cleanliness, and the countless demands of young children in a small house, produced

weariness in her body, weakened with successive childbearing, and in her spirit, plagued by frustration and hopelessness.

Jake was always looking for new ways to attract and keep customers. The benches in front of the store had proven so successful Jake floated another idea he hoped might bond customers to his store even more strongly. The nickel-plated samovar that Jake and Anna had carried with them on the long journey from Rosenthal to Saskatchewan had been given to Jake's aunt, their benefactor, and his mother gave them another smaller brass samovar.

Jake had the great idea to set up a "tea counter" in the store, the way it had been done in Russia. A good-sized samovar heated up in the morning and a pot of essence of tea warming on top would keep a large number of customers sipping all day long. And feeling good. He bargained with the Schellenbergs for the return of the large samovar for $5. This very Russian item didn't quite fit in with their modern décor. But Jake needed Anna in the store to keep the samovar filled and cups ready. He didn't do maid service. She was busy at home with the children, and nixed the idea. The wonderful tea idea never materialized, so the large, nickel-plated samovar stayed in our home.

The year I had been born in the tiny two-room shack in Laird, "We felt like kings and queens," Mother told me years later. She and Jake at least had a house of their own, even if it was only a small squatter's shack near the railroad tracks. Dozens of immigrants lived in the area also, but often with other people, in single rooms, in even more crowded conditions. They were all experiencing the same difficulties. In Blaine Lake there were no German immigrants from their part of Ukraine. No one except her family needed her.

Jake and Anna rarely argued in front of the children. When it occurred, friction was all-pervasive, settling into the cracks and corners of our small home, usually about money and Jake purchasing something without telling Anna. Anna may have wanted something—in fact, needed something for the home and family—but because only Jake had access to money, he got to it before she did, and bought what he thought they needed or she would like. Sometimes she didn't like it. Sometimes there were explosions of anger, with some shouting, then quietness. Life had to go on and there wasn't much room for anger in a small house with active children. The demands of survival were too high.

One high-ranking disagreement I recall was over a cow. Jake had bought a cow, like many other local villagers in Blaine Lake, yet owned no barn to house it. In his mind, every household should have a cow, just like in Russia. A family of girls needed a cow to milk. Anna, who

needed a better washing machine for the huge loads of laundry each week, questioned: "Why a cow?"

"Popoff—he had no money to pay his bill," Jake threw his hands up in a gesture of helplessness. He had no choice but to accept the cow. She simply didn't understand his situation as a storekeeper in a small community with lots of competition. He took many things in exchange for debts, like butter, saskatoon berries, cream. She didn't complain when he brought those items home. And there were four girls in the family. In Russia women always milked the cows. The girls would need chores as they grew up. A barn in the backyard was not impossible.

"But a cow?" She was afraid that looking after the cow would be added to her load of work, already too heavy.

The cow remained in her own barn on the farm. If Jake had ever had a fleeting thought that his daughters, now four in number, would learn to milk cows, Anna squelched it. The cow had to be sold. The cow was not coming on the premises. Within a week the cow was resold without ever making an appearance in Blaine Lake; but before long, Jake brought home a radio—a monstrous wooden affair with dozens of shiny silver tubes inside and whirling dials in front. It sat high on a shelf in the dining room, and we children were forbidden to touch it. Evenings Jake whirled and adjusted dials to bring in a station.

The noisy radio didn't make Anna happy either. The programs were in a language she didn't understand. One time, when the house was full with a visiting store manager and his family, Jake showed off his pride and joy once again—the radio. With children running in and out of the screen door, and a radio howling in the background, she said "Enough" and pulled the main switch to the electricity in the house. She shocked everyone. Unheard of.

In the spring of 1929, Anna and Jake's fourth daughter and fifth child, Susie, was born at home a mere eight years after Frieda's birth in Russia. A hired girl helped with the housework while Anna recovered from the birth. Jake was much too busy in the store to help around the house.

But they were soon to face another major challenge: About two o'clock in the morning on Monday, April 22, 1929, a few weeks after Susie's birth, the fire bell broke the villagers' sleep. The larger bell in the steeple of the Roman Catholic Church nearby was also ringing. Jake rushed into his clothes and dashed out of the back door. Before long, Anna told us children to get out of pajamas into clothes. She was concerned, we sensed. Annie couldn't find her shoes and panicked. Shoes were always supposed to be placed side-by-side next to the bed in

case of an emergency. Anna said there was a big fire on Main Street. We might have to move out. We had lived in Blaine Lake just a year. Susie was not even three weeks old, now asleep in her carriage.

A fire had broken out in the bowling alley. When the fire bell rang, all able-bodied men were expected to turn out with pails and energy. Firefighting equipment was limited. A pre-filled tank of water was dragged to the scene, and the men tried to drown the flames with their little splashes of water. A bucket brigade took over when the small water pumper was emptied. Before the volunteer firemen could stop the fire, it had raced down the street, engulfing a restaurant, three general stores, a business block housing the doctor's office, and the drug store. Anna stood at the east window of the house, lace curtains pinned back so we could watch the red flames leap to the sky to become black billowing clouds of fury only half a block away.

Jake's new brick store was first in line in the next block if the fire wasn't stopped. Anna, my sisters and brother, and I could see that from our window vantage point. If, instead, the fire crossed the street towards the bank and away from the store, our house stood in line to be destroyed. Bank employees were already emptying cabinets. "If the wind turns, we start moving out," Anna murmured to us terrified children. We watched, and waited.

We didn't dare go outside. Newborn Susie lay sleeping in her big wicker buggy, unaware of Anna's troubled look as she turned to check on her from time to time. Horse-drawn wagons were pulling in from the rural areas. The livery barn area down the street was filling up too rapidly. Someone had probably sent out a general telephone alarm. We didn't have a telephone, so Anna didn't know for sure. We three older girls risked a quick dart to the front gate for a closer look and then back to Mother's skirt.

After what seemed hours, Jake rushed home and, together with his clerk, yanked the canvas covering off the car, still on blocks in the backyard, and returned to Main Street. He barely had time to tell Anna he planned to cover the roof and front plate glass window of his store with canvas and wet it down. We Funk family always talked about it as "our store." The villagers called it Funk's store, but it was neither. Jake was the branch manager of the Blaine Lake OK Economy Store. Long familiarity with him had welded the two into one entity.

If the store caught fire, the whole next block would go, for buildings were built wall to wall with no firewalls between. Jake put off dragging his stock onto the street to keep temptation out of the eyes of flocking bystanders and beyond the range of their hands. He told Anna afterward

that as fast as other merchants emptied their shelves and carried the wares onto the street, looters piled them onto wagons and drove off. The looting bothered him as much as the fire, for he had hoped the people had left this Old Country practice behind. It was not wanted in this new country, where hard work and honesty could achieve all that was needed. The wind held steady, and the block with our house was spared.

Anna and we children waited for Jake to return. Breakfast was out of the question. Finally he came home, soot-covered, eyes dark and grim, to collapse in his chair by the stove and take off his water-soaked boots and grimy outer clothes. The village men had heroically conquered the fire.

The Funk family home in Blaine Lake that was nearly destroyed in the Big Fire of 1929.

Later in the morning, after Frieda and Annie had left for school, Anna, Susie in her carriage, and Jakie and I clinging to it, ventured down the street to look at the damage. One whole block of Main Street buildings had disappeared in the night, leaving behind charred remains of walls, shelving, and other furniture. The OK Economy store had come through unscathed, except for a few charred spots on the shingles caused by flying sparks and a cracked front window. The warehouse and outhouse behind the store were destroyed.

The bank building was only scorched. If it had burned, several lumber yards, the newspaper printing plant, and some houses, including our home, would have been destroyed. Only the tireless work of the bucket brigade on the roofs of these buildings on the west side of the

street had saved the whole block. For a time, it had even looked as if the Canadian National Railway station and some elevators were in danger.

We picked our way through as much of the area as was passable, gaping at the dark basement holes filled with smoking debris and water. Ashen curls drifted through the air. The streets were littered with chocolate bar wrappers, torn paper sacks, broken chairs, and store counters. We returned home. Home was better. At noon, Jake and Anna assured each other that now, with the only other grocery store defunct for a while, his store would be needed more than ever. His job was certain for some time.

For a long time, the Blaine Lake residents marked events by whether they had occurred before the Big Fire or after the Big Fire, sort of like B.C. and A.D. Before the Big Fire in 1929, the community had been like any other struggling community pasted on the wooded prairie land hoping it wouldn't get wiped off by hand of God or act of mankind. After the Fire? That remained to be seen.

The citizens, nearly all first-generation immigrants, lived in the present and refused to be determined by the past. They wanted to give hope every opportunity to stay near the surface, like the cream in their milk cans. Hope had brought them here from Europe, the British Isles, and elsewhere. As the farmers tilled the dark rich soil each spring, each one nurtured that small dream of independence they had brought with them across the ocean, and the hope they would never again want for food, clothing, and shelter.

The fire, which wiped out one whole block of business buildings, changed many things, but it didn't destroy that hope. After the fire, most of the owners of the destroyed buildings knew they wanted to stay. Blaine Lake was a good place to live with its rich farmlands.

But it was not the only major fire to affect that little prairie community. House chimney fires in fall, when stoves were heated to ward off the cold, were common. An elevator burned to the ground in 1933 in a blaze of raging fury as villagers stood helpless and watched. It was rebuilt the same year. Blaine Lake was a major hub for grain shipping and needed its six elevators. The small fire department could do nothing for the lumberyard behind our home that burned a little later. But life always picked up once again.

Anna loved to read, but she had few German books to read and no time for her favorite pastime. I, the child at home, always active and curious, received slaps and swats to vent Anna's frustration. Every time I snuggled up to Mother to sit on her lap, Susie or Jakie required attention. One morning at breakfast, Dad mentioned going to Saskatoon

to discuss business matters with his employers at the Central Wholesale office. A trip in winter meant going by train and being gone two days at least.

The next morning, early, Anna bundled me in my winter coat, cap, mittens, and felt boots, and I walked proudly beside my father to the train station, carrying my small suitcase. Because I was underage, I could ride free to the big city. I was going to ride on a train, a new experience, without my bothersome brother and sisters. I didn't know how to feel. Sitting next the window, I watched small towns with their tall red elevators, miles of bush, and snow-covered fields glide past, and listened to the haunting wail of the steam locomotive whistle as the train neared a crossing. The chug-a-chug of the train wheels soon lulled me to sleep.

In Saskatoon in the late afternoon, Dad and I walked to a hotel, where I slept in a cot next to his bed. He showed me where the bathroom was and how to use the flush toilet. The next morning, we walked to a café to eat breakfast in a booth, just us two. No Jakie or Susie demanding attention. A waitress brought us each a plate of French fried toast, which I had never tasted before. Crunchy on the outside and wonderfully soft inside. Sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar. I ate every crumb. And licked the plate.

All morning, my dress covered with a clean pinafore, I sat quietly in the corners of offices coloring while Dad talked to men. A man in a white shirt with black satin sleeve protectors gave me paper to write on. Another found a paperweight and a bag of marbles in his desk drawer and told me I was a good girl. Then my father and I rode the train back home and life went back to normal once again. I had been Cinderella before midnight for two days.

A cause for rejoicing the following year was the arrival of the last Funk relatives to make it out of Russia before the Bolshevik regime blocked emigration. Jacob and Tina Funk and their two children, Helene, 6, and Frieda, 4, arrived in March 1930. They were Jake's cousins.

In the 1930s, the Soviet Union continued to spiral downward under the leadership of Joseph Stalin. During the years 1936–1938 alone, the pinnacle of the suffering, close to 9,000 Mennonites (mostly men) were imprisoned, exiled, or executed.[25] Anna's brother-in-law, Jacob Klassen,

[25] Peter Letkemann, "Mennonite Victims of the 'Great Terror,' 1936–1938" *JMS* 16 (1998): 37. Letkemann also notes that the 9,000 "taken" were about eight to nine percent of the Mennonite population in Russia at the time, which he estimates to have been about 100,000. He argues that the ratio is at least four times higher than that of those "taken" from the non-Mennonite population, largely because the Mennonites were prosperous, religious, anti-communist, and identified as German. Through to 1956, when the remaining internal exiles were finally released, it is estimated that a total of 30,000

was deported to the Perm area where he later died in a Gulag. His wife Tina and family followed him there.

Letters from this distant land brought sadness to Anna as she thought of her older sister starving in cold Siberia. Jake tried to outwit censors by smuggling sewing machine needles in the fold of a photograph to this family. Once, he sprinkled crushed saccharine tablets over glue spread over the back of a small picture and pasted another on top of it, hoping that just the taste of sweetness might bring a small moment of joy. I can still see him doing this.

About 20,000 Mennonites had already left Russia by late 1928, when 70 Mennonite families moved to Moscow to wait for passports for six months while living in the suburbs. To get rid of them, the Russian government granted passports to this small group. When this news reached the Mennonite settlements, it was their signal to rush to Moscow. To stop an expected mass exodus, the government immediately declared that public auction sales were illegal, so some fled secretly at night, leaving everything behind. By October of 1929, about four to five thousand refugees lived in the suburbs of Moscow wanting permission to leave for Canada. By November 24, the day before Canada gave her final answer—they would not accept any more immigrants—the number of Mennonite refugees in Moscow had reached 13,000.

After warning them, the Soviet government began sending them back to where they had come from or to forced labor camps. They were crowded into boxcars, sometimes without heating or sanitary provisions or adequate food and water. The cars were sealed so that no one could escape. About 8,000 were rounded up and sent away. Fatalities were high.

On November 6, 1929, the Jacob and Tina Funk family were among those who fled secretly from their home in one of the Mennonite villages in Ukraine. They packed up in the middle of the night and traveled to Moscow, where they hid in the home of a Russian woman married to a man sympathetic toward the Mennonites. Russian officials initially denied visas to the thousands of applicants, arguing that the ones already in Canada had become servants and people of no account, and that the Russian government could not protect them in a foreign country. In

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Mennonites perished in the "Soviet Inferno." This number includes those who were arrested, imprisoned, and executed or exiled and then later perished in forced labor camps. See also Peter Letkemann, "The Fate of Mennonites in the Volga-Ural Region, 1929–1941" *JMS* 23 (2008): 181–200; Marlene Epp, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (University of Toronto Press, 2000); Anne Konrad, *Red Quarter Moon: A Search for Family in the Shadow of Stalin* (University of Toronto Press, 2012); and Ruth Derksen Siemens, *Remember Us: Letters from Stalin's Gulag (1930–1937)* (Pandora Press, 2008).

actual fact, the Bolshevik officials were concerned that the articles appearing in foreign periodicals were asking why so many wanted to leave a free country. Their leaving gave Russia a bad reputation. To top it off, the Russian government was not happy that the Canadian government accepted only the healthy and left the sick and handicapped for them to look after. They demanded that the would-be emigrants stay, as the Mennonites were valued for their cultural and agricultural contributions to Russia.

In the end, the negative publicity, combined with pressure from Germany, resulted in exit documents issued to about 5,000 of those assembled in Moscow. Thanks to the onset of the Great Depression several months earlier, Germany agreed to accept these refugees only on the condition that they move on to another country. For the same reason, Canada allowed only those with individual sponsors to enter Canada. For the rest, Paraguay or Brazil became their new country.

After a month in Moscow spent petitioning and waiting on appointments, Jacob was among those able to acquire the needed documents to leave Russia for Germany. Anyone who received a visa was expected to make "a contribution" to the Red Cross. The Jacob Funk family left on December 4, 1929, among the last to make it out of the country during that era. At the dreaded Red Gate, they breathed a prayer of thankfulness that they had been allowed to pass, knowing that many others had also come to Moscow only to be forcibly sent away by the authorities without exit papers.

Jacob, Tina, and their two daughters spent Christmas in a refugee camp in Germany, living in barracks in crowded conditions, sleeping on straw piled on the floors and covered with blankets. Every morning, each child was dosed with cod liver oil. After three months, they boarded a ship for Canada, arriving in March 1930. Jake and Anna opened their small home to these long lost relatives. We six girls slept three to a bed in one bedroom. Jacob and Tina slept in Jakie's bedroom. Eleven people, seven of them children, more than filled the small frame house for the few months we lived together. Each week, it meant mounds of clothing and bedding to be washed. But everyone pitched in to help. One morning, Jacob came down having shaved off his "Russian" beard. He was ready to look more Canadian. The process had begun.

Each evening, Anna, in her effort to build up this emaciated family, served the children a cup of cocoa, a holdover from her days of cooking in the MCC kitchens in Rosenthal. In spring, the newcomers moved to a one-room log house in Laird.

A sea change was taking place in the Funk home regarding language. They had been in this new land now for eight years. In the summer of 1931, Frieda and Annie spent some weeks with the Jacob Funks in Laird and attended German school taught at church. When they came home, Anna promised us three older girls each a purse, a wonderful acquisition, if we would use only High German at home rather than the comfortable Low German. We were learning English at school, and Anna was learning it in the evenings from them. High German and English introduced the family to a whole new culture in church and village life. Anna's horizons were expanding. Her health was improving. Her spirits improved. Tensions were easing in the home.

One early winter Sunday afternoon, after the first snow had covered the ground, Jakie and Susie were napping and Jake was warming his feet as usual near the big living room stove. Anna turned to me, "Come, let's go for a sleigh ride. Get your coat and mittens." Dressed in the warmest clothes we could find, we tramped off toward the railroad tracks, dragging the small sled. At a crossing, where there was considerable slope, I got on the sled and Anna gave it a vigorous shove down the hill for a thrilling ride. I pulled it up again, and Anna, kneeling, her coat tight about her plump body, a tuque on her head, grasped the rope and careened down the hill. Something had turned in her life.

That evening, the family sat down to supper at a table set with a white tablecloth embroidered with red roses and green sprays of leaves. It was made out of flour sacks, but it was a white tablecloth, like she had seen on the table of the Schellenberg home when they first arrived in Canada. She prepared cocoa to dunk our *tweeback* into. That evening, as Frieda studied her lesson for the next day, Anna again read with her. The key to the exit door from her isolation lay in learning English. That became the rule the rest of the winter. Frieda and Annie read, she read. Life moved along more smoothly.

Not everything was so rosy. The stock market had crashed in 1929 and a crop failure the same year forebode grim times ahead.

Rearei

Rearei was one step above scrambled eggs, but a step below the large, flat Russian pancakes. It took less time than the latter, but was more filling than the former and more satisfying to the Mennonite palate. I often use a baking mix for a lighter product.

* * * * *

2 tbsp flour, or baking mix
4 eggs
½ cup milk
Pinch of salt

Mix flour, salt, and eggs well. Add milk. Heat 1 tbsp butter in a heavy frying pan, and add the egg mixture all at once. Fry slowly, stirring all the time until every little morsel is golden brown. Serve with syrup, honey, or jam. Leftovers can be reheated, and, in our home, tasted better than the first time.

17

The long, dark season of drought, dust, and despair

The 1920s were a time of prosperity for Saskatchewan farmers, with bumper crops and high prices for wheat. Riding high on the good times, the large numbers of Doukhobors in the area built a huge Prayer Home in 1930 in which to gather. Solidly built of light-colored brick on Main Street at the entrance to Blaine Lake, the large, impressive building became the center for Doukhobor life and a placemark to guide strangers into the village.

In 1929, with the fall of the stock market, the bottom fell out of the grain market. Blaine Lake had been known as the "million bushel area." The drought that followed the good crops of the 1920s brought the community and the province to its knees with its one-crop economy. The summer sun baked the earth and withered the crops. With the drought came the "black blizzards" with wind-blown dust that piled up along fence rows and sifted into every crack and cranny of the frame houses. Dusting the house became an everyday job. Housewives placed wet clothes on windowsills to keep the dust out. However, we children reveled in it. This extra dry, fine dust made the best mud for mud pies, smooth like rich cream and dark in color. Swishing toes through the mud after the brief, rare rains was a special treat. Gardens were sprinkled with water painfully hauled from local wells, sometimes by the pail, trip by trip.

In 1928–1929, the average Saskatchewan income per capita was $478. By 1933, it had fallen to $135. Yields per acre dropped from 27 bushels or more to three or less by 1937. The price of wheat plummeted from $1.60 to 28 cents in 1932. To add to the misery, grasshopper and worm infestations plagued the farmers. In 1933, another blow fell when a fire destroyed an elevator. When the general call went out, the entire

town turned out to watch the huge edifice bravely stand erect for hours as if challenging the destructive forces to bring it down, smoke belching from its innards, until finally flames took over and the glowing monster came crashing down. Tons of grain spilled out onto the tracks. The small volunteer fire brigade could do nothing but watch.

Jobs were few and those who had jobs, like teachers dependent on local taxes for their salary, often didn't get paid. Their salaries fell to $400 a year or less in the Depression years. Some had to turn to physical labor to earn enough to keep families fed. Physicians, lawyers, and other service providers were often paid in farm produce. Only critically ill patients stayed in the city hospitals at the high cost of $1.50 a day. Families turned to home remedies for medical problems. In Blaine Lake, everyone kept a garden, sometimes even chickens and a cow in the backyard if they lived near the perimeter, where there was room for pasture.

The Depression affected all social groups. Jake became good friends with local professional men like the station agent, the bank manager, and the United Church minister. This church had a hard time paying its ministers' salaries, meager as they were, and maintaining buildings. Once Rev. Parsons asked Jake, "Do you believe in prayer? Then pray for me." He didn't say what his problem was, but Jake was certain his family's cupboard was bare. They hadn't done any grocery shopping for some time.

The village people hunkered down as each year, the crops continued to fail. They had known hardship before; this too would pass. For Jake and Anna, their dream of a better life had seemed almost in their grasp after 1928's huge bonus and the store's brisk business, and was now being blown away along with the dust that permeated all corners of house and daily life.

Jake spiked a piece of cardboard on the kitchen cupboard to record daily expenses. Often Anna sent a child to the butcher shop before school to buy meat. Hamburger was five cents a pound and roast beef about 15 cents, a rare treat. We first stopped at the store to get some money. At suppertime, each child was interrogated by Jake if he or she had been to the store for groceries or cash to buy meat at the butcher shop or thread at the dry goods store. "*Hast du es angeschrieben*?" (Did you write it down?) A stern tongue-lashing resulted if we hadn't. Jake didn't want anyone accusing him of stealing from the store to feed his family. Hanging onto his integrity was all-important. Saturday evening, Jake added the crooked rows of figures in many handwritings, deducted his

weekly salary, and posted the balance, always a deficit, on the top of a new sheet.

The two adults and we five children who crowded around the small kitchen table for meals always had enough to eat. It may not always have been a balanced meal, but it was enough. *Kjielkje* (homemade noodles) with fried onions and ring sausage was a mainstay, as were soups cooked with garden produce. Liver with fried onions was common. The butcher gave away soup bones when you bought other meat, so *borscht* and vegetable soup appeared on the menu often. In summer, soup was cooked with anything green and edible to which huge gobs of sour cream were added. Anna canned fruit, pickles, and jams in season.

Jake brought home dented cans, soft brown bananas, rock-hard lemons, withered cheese, and, occasionally, the hard remnants in the peanut butter pail, no one wanted. Before homogenized products, peanut butter, a staple sold by bulk, was difficult to keep soft. Anna mashed the hard layer and mixed it with syrup. Large Russian pancakes fried in butter and served with syrup, the kind that kept you eating more and more, were regular Saturday noon fare. Cheap, satisfying food. I never tasted a firm yellow banana until I left home.

Farm butter taken in trade that had gone rancid was brought home by the 10–20 pound lot. Anna rendered it and used the clarified butter for baking rolls, *perieschkje*, and other kinds of pastries. People marveled at her light, tasty rolls. Syrup sandwiches were a mainstay in children's school lunches, as was bread spread with lard and sprinkled with salt. We Funks all came home for the noon meal—dinner. In 1936, eggs were five cents a dozen and cream sold for $1.50 for a five-gallon can. Flour was bought by the 100-pound bag so that bread was always in good supply in our home even if, by the end of the week, the slices had curled as they dried and required much chewing. Nothing tasted as good a slice of fresh bread out of the oven. Sliced bought bread was a rare luxury.

Occasionally, a general phone call went out to rural areas to announce that hay, straw, or grain had arrived by the boxcar load, a donation from generous farmers farther away from the drought-stricken prairies. Farmers could come to pick up dried fish, fruit, and hay donated by generous people on the West Coast.

Frugality was the key word in those years. Many children wore mitts made out of socks whose foot had long ago lost its usefulness. Anna turned an old coat of hers into a garment for me at age 13, but my pride prevented me from wearing this "old woman's coat" and I clung to my thin skating jacket all winter—and froze.

The most common fabric was flour and sugar sacks, used for everything—sheets, tea towels, pillowcases, curtains, dresser scarves, pajamas. A little embroidery and a crocheted hem turned the item into an object of beauty. Colorful, printed feed sacks became dresses and aprons. We girls learned to knit new sweaters from old, ripped ones. Anna ripped and turned Jake's pants, worn-out at the knees, and sewed them into skirts for us girls, and his shirts into blouses. Everything was used and reused. Clothing worn beyond usefulness became part of a braided rag rug. Outgrown clothes were carried to a poorer neighbor.

Some farmers in the Blaine Lake area lost their land through foreclosure and moved elsewhere to find a new means of livelihood, but most stayed put, cutting back on luxuries, limiting their needs and adjusting. Teachers like Mr. D. from the rural Ottawa school, a family man with three or four children, decided to leave the province for greener pastures in British Columbia. As they were about to move, Mrs. D. got food poisoning at a farewell picnic. She and the children stayed at our home until she recovered. Anna washed all their clothing. Their underwear was patched and re-patched. Their car was in poor condition compared to Jake's vehicle, which was maintained regularly beyond its need. Mr. D. had tied the engine to the chassis with a chain. Jake worried for them when they left on the long journey westward, over the mountains. People were moving westward like droves of livestock fleeing before a cruel taskmaster.

On occasion, a family that had lost everything in the drought moved north instead of west to start homesteading again on non-surveyed land. Our home became a way station on the annual two-day journey for Mennonites wanting to visit relatives in the Laird/Hepburn area. They had found the long winter isolation unbearable.

Winter weather in Saskatchewan can be cruel to animals and people, yet these families persisted in travel, trotting horses into town, breath steaming, heavy fur frosted, and bells jingling. Always such people were poor and could not afford hotel rooms, so they bedded down in the livery stable and used a dark corner as a latrine. If Jake spotted them there on his way home from the store in the evening, he brought them home, where Anna fed them and gave them a bed to sleep on by shifting children to the floor. Some travelers were dirty, some clean. They arrived with sheepskins and horse blankets, which they draped over the living room linoleum to stay warm for the next day's journey. Some nights the house was so full of human and animal smells it felt like a population explosion had taken place during the night.

One evening, Jake brought home two men who had brought a load of lumber to sell. The next morning Anna, always generous, gave the one man with severe arthritis in his knees a crazy quilt made from old coats and socks to cover his lower body on the way home. Weather often dipped many degrees below freezing. Weeks later, he returned with his wife and children on their way to Laird. The wife turned to Anna, "Don't you recognize it?"

"Recognize what?"

"The blanket you gave my husband when he came through the last time?"

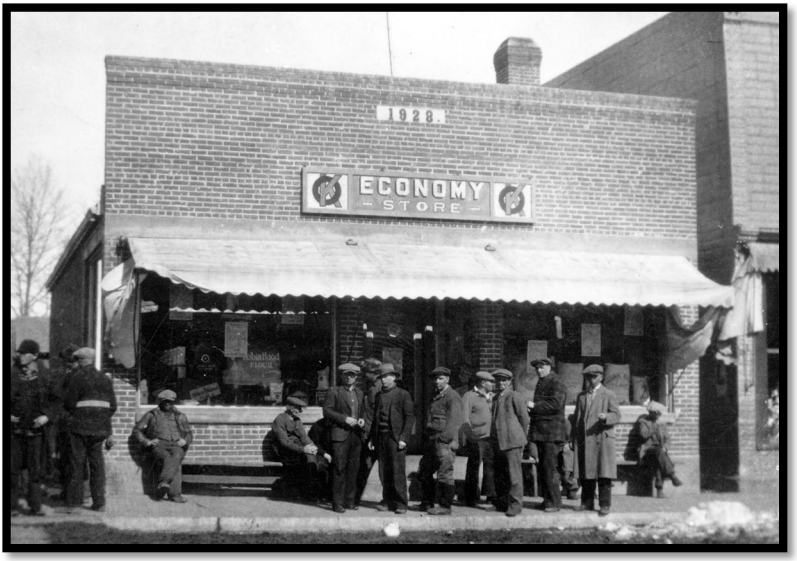
She had picked apart the quilt made of old materials. On the children's feet were the upper portions of socks Anna had cut open to use in the quilt, neatly sewn together again to fit little feet. Jake's old coat pieces had been stitched into a coat for the little boy. Each part of the recycled blanket had been recycled. "Without that blanket, we could never have made this trip. Thank you, thank you!"

"Bennett wagons" became a familiar, if strange, sight on the streets—a car body or a wagon with car axles and wheels pulled by horses, named after the Prime Minister of Canada at the time. It meant smoother rides than the regular wooden wheels. In winter, farmers traveled in heated, battery-lighted cabooses and open cutters. On cold Saturdays, they were parked by the dozen around the livery barns like chicks around the mother hen, smoke from their chimneys reaching for the sky, all wagon tongues pointing the same direction.

Cellars were filled with whatever garden produce housewives could find to store, can, or dry. Wild fruit like chokecherries, pin cherries, saskatoon berries, gooseberries, and others were preserved or made into jams and jellies. The drought-resistant rhubarb was a regular for dessert, if any, appearing often in different forms. A moneymaker for the clever young boy was capturing gophers for their tails, which yielded two cents apiece when presented at the municipal office. Two cents could buy at least four pieces of candy in Funk's store at the two-for-one cent counter. The bounty on crow's eggs in spring was also a moneymaker.

A widespread grasshopper epidemic devastated the crops during the 1930s. To combat grasshoppers, harsh chemicals like Paris Green were mixed with water and sawdust, often with bare hands because no one had money to buy rubber gloves. This wet bait was scattered along roadsides in the grass. Chickens had a field day with the abundance of grasshoppers—and farm wives with the abundance of eggs. They were traded for groceries at the OK Economy Store, where the clerks candled them and stacked them in crates to be shipped to Saskatoon. Eggs at five

cents a dozen became daily fare in many homes. Easter meant at least a couple of dozen eggs were dyed, often with homemade dyes as in Russia, and we children ate boiled eggs until almost ill.



The OK Economy Store and some of the men who spent much of the day at the store, inside around the stove or outside on the bench, visiting and eating sunflower seeds.

Equally devastating was an epidemic of encephalomyelitis, a horse brain and spinal cord disease, in 1937. Horsepower was central to all farms. A farmer with a stable full of draft and harness horses was a rich man. The disease attacked both types. We Funk children watched anxiously one afternoon over our fence as a horse lay dying in the neighbor's yard. A group of men in bib overalls hovered around the animal that was quivering and moaning in agony. This was enough excitement for several days of sharing around the supper table.

During the 1930s, farmers bought purple gas for their equipment at a cheaper price than that sold for automobiles, but some soon discovered that if it was poured into clear glass jugs and allowed to stand in the sun, it turned clear and could then be used in cars. Law enforcement officers didn't know how to deal with that. Unemployed hobos by the dozens or more rode the rails, stopping off at villages to scrounge the town for work or just for food before moving on. Rawleighs and Watkins peddlers knocked at doors regularly to sell their wares to housewives who had no cash lying around.

During the Depression years, Jake was on the village council for seven years, and overseer for one year in 1940. I have wondered since if he thought back to Russia, where only well-educated, highly esteemed, or prosperous men were chosen as village leaders. Yet here he was, left-handed Jake, a leader, not among Mennonites, but his real brothers, the Russians. And there was a need for his leadership. People trusted him.

Meetings were sometimes long, lasting far into the night as the council members deliberated what to do to help the village's desperate needs. The village fathers had no money because citizens had no money to pay taxes. Their credit at the bank was overdrawn, yet they needed money to buy necessities. Those teachers who boarded at the local "basin-and-water-jug" hotel had bills outstanding there as well as at local businesses. The village was in dire straits. In 1936, many businesses were trying to hang on. But business was at a standstill. Villagers came to the stores to stand and talk—especially at Jake's, with its large central register blowing a steady heat up their pant legs. Conversation warmed the soul even if food was scarce and the stomach remained empty.

Jake had heard of a couple in Battleford who gave the minister a check for $10 for marrying them. The minister bought groceries with the check. That check passed through eight to ten hands before it came to the bank—where it was refused for insufficient funds. It came back to the preacher who refused to sue the groom and paid the $10. In the meantime, it had been used as money. Credit worked.

Jake suggested to the council, "Let's try social credit." "How does that work?" was the response. His idea was to give teachers a small amount of cash, and the rest in credit notes to be spent only in Blaine Lake establishments. He went to the hotel manager and to owners of local businesses, who all owed taxes to the town, and asked them to accept credit notes from the town. School trustees were given some cash and the rest in credit notes to pay teachers, who were asked to use them to pay their bills at local businesses. They in turn used them to pay taxes. The bank manager, suspicious of this strange enterprise, inquired what was going on under his nose. They told him. This worked for one or two years before the government issued relief vouchers.

In 1930, a "provision for relief" agreement was signed between the Dominion of Canada, the provincial government, and the municipality, with the governments providing 80 percent of the relief and the village the other 20 percent. Council meetings dealing with relief issues lasted for hours, with irate, hungry men and women storming the municipal offices demanding help, and Jake, who could speak Slavic languages, attempting to placate them. The amount each family received was

minimal; not many received even $15 a month. Able-bodied people were required to work for the village in public works projects such as bush clearing and road and sidewalk building at twenty cents an hour and the earned sum applied to pay for direct relief. Some days, the pile of relief vouchers in our store far exceeded the cash taken in during the day. Money was non-existent. The till remained empty except for a few coins children brought in to buy candy.

One evening, when the village council was in session in the gray-painted municipal office on Main Street, a local man in ragged clothing entered begging, pleading, for help. He was hungry. He had no food. They didn't quite believe him, so he went outside, threw a brick through the window, and refused to leave until the local policeman arrived to arrest him and take him to jail. "Thanks," he said. "That's what I wanted." Now he would be assured of food for at least a few months.

When his sentence expired, he returned to Blaine Lake and came to Jake's store, a little heavier, still broke, but still hungry. Jake sent the usual note home to Anna, "Give this man a meal." Anna didn't know how to treat an ex-felon, yet she heated some *borscht* and set the table. As he downed the food, he exclaimed with great gusto that he hadn't eaten such good food all his time in prison. Once he had said the taboo word, Anna felt free to ask him about life in jail. Any fan of her food was her friend, ex-felon or not, and deserved her hospitality.

Stealing became a problem in local stores, as often happens when the economy dips. Jake watched one man steal a bar of soap, so he brought stealing into the conversation with the regulars visiting around the floor furnace by telling the story about a rich man who stole a bar of soap. The man left hurriedly and the next day brought Jake a chicken. Russia-style tactics worked.

Stealing also happened in the school. One evening, Jake told his family about the investigation by the school board in the matter of theft from lunches. The boy, about age 10, had been caught and severely punished for his misdeeds. When the men investigated the home, they found the boy had stolen because the cupboard where he lived with his grandmother was bare. The men had wept together at the inequities of a society that turned a hungry child into a thief and offered no solution but the strap.

One noon, Jake told about a local father waiting for him when he arrived at the store. "What do you want?" "An empty wooden sardine box." His wife had given birth during the night to a stillborn baby and he needed a box to bury it in. Jake picked out the best little wooden box

he could find from among his basement supply of empty boxes waiting to be turned into kindling. A coffin for a baby was the least he could do.

The hunger years were a time of desperation, especially for men who saw their life's savings lost in the 1929 bank crash and the subsequent drop in the economy. Sometimes, when Jake walked home from the store, he brought loaves of bread and bologna rings to give those traveling from town to town in the hope of making a few dollars. The men tore the bread and sausage into pieces with their hands and divided it among themselves.

On rare occasions, Jake told about that great tragedy—a suicide in a family. One morning, as we children walked past the lumberyard on our way to school, we noticed the green blinds were still down in the office window. At noon, Jake told us the manager had shot himself during the night. On another occasion, the father hanged himself from an upstairs window. Another chose the barn where his daughter, our classmate, found him hanging. Despair followed depression and desperation.

Although prohibition ended in 1925 in Saskatchewan, illegal distilling continued. Some men drowned their sorrows in alcohol, especially homebrew. Stills were easily hidden in the heavily wooded hilly pastureland. Except for beer, liquor for legal home consumption had to be ordered by mail and then delivered by train. Homebrew was easier to obtain. The person caught manufacturing homebrew had his still either taken away for evidence or destroyed on the spot. Fines were steep, but a return to business was swift. In summer, when we children slept outside in the tent, we became very much aware of the brisk business in homebrew going on next door.

The makers of homebrew had devious ways to hide their product. One man poured it into the drinking water pail with a ladle in it, as if it were always there. Other times it was hidden in the chamber pot under the bed, in straw piles, buried near buildings, or even the roadways in the very spot where the lawman parked his vehicle.

Men desperate for alcohol and unable to buy it at the beer parlor came to Jake's store asking for vanilla, mostly for the alcohol. In time, he became wise to their ways and hid the vanilla behind the counter. When one man with a fondness for vanilla sidled to his competitor's counter, plunked his money down and whispered, "One bottle of vanilla," Mr. L. reached under the counter, grabbed a bottle and gave it to the man, who scurried out the door and around the corner to the outhouse. He emerged sputtering and fuming, his mouth, chin, and shirt spattered a bright cherry red. Mr. L. had grabbed food coloring instead of vanilla.

Two local men tried another ploy. They asked the druggist for alcohol. "What do you want it for?" "To rub our horse down—arthritic joints." The druggist obliged, believing their reason, and handed them a bottle of rubbing alcohol, poisonous to humans. The men, rejoicing at their good fortune, drank it and died as a result.

Saturday night, when the whole countryside overfilled the town, was a favorite time to drink, sometimes resulting in a brawl. Two rural families from Great Britain carried their nationalistic squabbles with them over the ocean, and once, deep in their cups, their friendly arguments became embellished with fisticuffs, resulting in bloody noses and black eyes. Years later, the two men met on a country road and picked up the argument again. The one man knocked the other one over, who fell on a rock and was dead by the time the doctor arrived. Jake Funk acted as coroner. He had had lots of experience handling dead bodies during the war in Russia.

Many people unwittingly imbibed. Anna regularly drank Adlerika, a product for feminine complaints—mostly alcohol—before going to bed because it made her feel better. Many other home remedies were also heavily laced with alcohol.

Water, that staple of life, was used sparingly in all homes during the Depression years. Lawns were only something you saw pictured in magazines. Gardens were watered with water hauled from the village well, one pail at a time or in a small barrel balanced on a little wagon, carefully avoiding ruts to keep as much of the precious stuff as possible before reaching home.

A cistern with a pump provided water for washing, but drinking water had to be hauled from the local wells near the rink or the local jail. Every home and school had a pail for drinking water with a cup or ladle beside it. It was important to check the level of the water in the pail before supper so there was enough for tea, a daily staple in the Funk home. Baths were a once-a-week affair in a small tub hauled into the kitchen, with the cleanest going first. This meant the smallest child had the privilege of bathing in clear water, the oldest in water thick with soap residue.

In good years, the cistern was soon full with overflow rain from the roof of the house. But in the 1930s, Jake had ice from the North Saskatchewan River delivered by the wagonload to fill it at $2 a load. The coming of the iceman was always exciting to watch as he hauled each clean-cut blue-silver piece with his huge tongs from the waiting flatbed sleigh, letting it fall carefully into the cistern so that it wouldn't damage the walls and cause a leak.

In winter, to make the ice last longer, Anna melted snow carried in by the tubful to the big barrel kept in a corner of the lean-to kitchen. It had to be filled regularly with clean snow carved out of snowdrifts with a shovel. Snow contaminated by wandering dogs was out of the question. The sound of the snow settling in the tank throughout the day, sometimes with a soft clunk and a splash, became a comforting sound, one of the rhythms of life in northern Saskatchewan, like the regular popping of nails in the siding in bitterly cold weather and the scrunching of heavy boots on sidewalks.

Precious cistern or snow water was used first to wash our hair, but from then on it took on lesser tasks, like washing the kitchen floor, the verandah floor, then the outhouse or playhouse floor. You kept everything you owned clean at all costs, regardless of the effort it took. In Anna's thinking, poverty never allowed cleanliness to be shoved aside. Cleanliness was not only next to godliness, it was a form of godliness. One day, when one of us found a dead louse in a borrowed book, she was visibly disturbed. Lice in Canada? The carrier of disease! The symbol of everything unclean and despicable! Unbelievable! Impossible! She thought lice had been left far behind in Russia with the revolutionary forces and their filth. Fortunately, we never saw another.

Laundry day meant a long, hard day of backbreaking work for Anna, especially in winter, with the older girls pitching in before and after school. By Saturday evening, the barrels in the back entryway had to be full of water, ice, and snow so it could melt over Sunday. The copper boiler was brought in and filled with water so that it would be hot early the next morning. All items were washed in the hand-powered wooden washing machine. We children had to jerk the handle back and forth a specific number of times before leaving for school. White clothes like underwear, towels, pajamas, and other items were boiled to achieve maximum whiteness, then washed and rinsed with bluing before being hung out to dry, even in the coldest weather. In winter, the frozen clothes were brought in from the line outside and hung in the kitchen to dry. It was easy to get lost in the maze of long-legged underwear and sheets in the low-ceilinged kitchen. The moisture condensation settled on the windowpanes, creating furry ridges up to an inch or more in thickness that never melted until spring.

The annual spring housecleaning ritual was always attacked with vigor and vengeance by Anna, and acknowledged with fear and trembling by the children. This was Anna's heaviest chore of the year. This was not the time to come with special requests, however trivial. A demon-chasing ultra-cleanliness had been loosed. During the dust years, housecleaning

was intensified beyond measure. It may have been a throwback to Russian ways where whitewashing the exterior and interior of the house to let in the sun and drive away all possible remnants of winter was among the spring rituals of the Ukrainians. Easter could not be celebrated without thorough housecleaning first. The soul required its own purification before Easter, through confession and communion.

Anna did not demand that much, but every corner and cranny in her domain had to be disturbed. The family's usually well-regulated lives were thrown off-kilter by this yearly routine. Curtains and rugs were washed, bedding aired, pipes cleaned, walls dusted, windowsills and kitchen furniture painted. No child dared breathe when Jake carried the upstairs pipes down and out the door to be gently knocked to rid them of the winter's accumulation of soot.

A welcome spring task was the dismantling of the inside toilet housed in Jake and Anna's tiny bedroom, an arrangement of a pail inside a pail attached to a pipe connected to the chimney that carried away the fumes. The fairly good-sized inner pail had to be emptied regularly. Seven people create a lot of waste. Everyone stood at a great distance and held their noses when Jake carried the heavy pail, nearly full to overflowing, down the steep steps out the door to the back. One slip would have meant the near-end of the world. Fortunately, it never happened.

The outdoor toilet at the back of the yard was kept as clean as the house. It was regularly swept and washed. Leftover paint of any color was slapped on wherever a spot showed wear, turning it into a Joseph's coat of many colors. Each Saturday, the door to the outhouse stood open as it dried, thereby showing the passing world its choice of reading material. Anna kept "educational" literature (religious literature or information about the birds and bees) in it for its captive audience. She knew her children grabbed anything with print on it when they had a few minutes to spare, even a religious tract or a detailed explanation of electricity. Only visitors were bewildered when a child said, "I read in the toilet this morning…" A standing rule was that each child had to bring an armload of wood with her on the way back from the outhouse because the woodpile was along the fence on the way.

In the darkness of a summer night, each child, under pressure to relieve herself, felt each step on the narrow sidewalk to the outhouse carefully, berating the sister who had forgotten to put the flashlight back into its accustomed place in the kitchen cabinet. At all times of the day, if she had played too long and too hard and the call of nature had been obeyed too late, the trip to the back was a gymnastic feat of daring and courage. It was personal disaster to fail. It was not unusual to see a child

clutching clothing frantically, discarding coats and belts without regard to where they landed, in a panic to make it to the two-holer in time.

Jake always longed for the sauna baths of Ukraine, and extolled the benefits of this strange bathing arrangement to his family long before he paid some men to haul a little square building to a corner of the backyard. A carpenter arrived and rearranged the insides of this ancient building into three small rooms. The anteroom served as a dressing room and contained the opening for the oven, the wood supply, a bench, and coat hooks. A small inner room contained the stone-covered barrel heater and tiered benches where the actual sweating and scrubbing was done.

The idea was that when you finished with the ritual of sweating and washing, you should be able to burst forth into the brisk outer air shouting "Hallelujah" as if your sins had been newly forgiven. Usually we girls went through the motions somewhat perfunctorily, sitting on one of the three-tiered benches with a little basin of water for the prescribed 10–15 minutes for a short or long sweat. After a few minutes on the lowest bench, we moved to a higher level to become acclimatized to the heat. Then we quickly washed and dried our sweaty bodies, yanked our clothes on, and dived into the freer air outside, glad when it was summer and groaning in winter when the frigid air hit us.

One year, the annual housecleaning had an added component. Some guest had brought along uninvited guests. We girls came down in the morning with huge red itchy spots on legs and bodies. Bedbugs? As bad as lice! Not in Anna's clean house. Not in Canada. But they were there nonetheless, ugly little creatures crawling along the mattress seams. We children were instructed to tell no one of the tragedy that had befallen us. An old frame house like ours had too many cracks and crannies to fill with just ordinary dusting powder, the first line of attack, so that summer, Jake and Anna slept on the old couch in the playhouse and we children in the tent. Every window, doorframe or possible crack was sealed with newspaper strips, and then smudge pots of sulfur were left burning in the house for several days to cleanse the house of living inhabitants. The house was livable again.

But Anna was concerned about the bedbugs returning. One evening, Jake came home with the reluctant request to bed an elderly couple and grandchild passing through town for the night. Anna agreed and fed them supper as she usually did when they arrived.

"Where will they sleep?" asked Jake, knowing her reluctance to let people into the house overnight, especially unclean ones. She'd find a place for them. She would provide all bedding; theirs could stay in their cutter. She made up her and Jake's bed for her guests to use. She slept

with us girls in our bedroom, and Susie slept on the floor. Jake would have to sleep in Jakie's bed for the night, a brand-new arrangement, but he agreed.

After everyone had settled down, Anna could hear Jake muttering about the stench caused by Jakie's woolen socks and moccasins, stiff with perspiration, waiting to be pulled on again the next day. They rested calmly beneath the bed, close to Jake's nose. Jake often claimed he didn't perspire. Jakie couldn't make the same claim—the whole family knew it when he removed his socks. Jake covered the offending items with his clothes. No use. He moved them farther under the bed. The acrid odor of several days' perspiration hung heavy in the small room. Sleep was impossible. Finally, he opened the window and flung the socks and moccasins far out into the snow. And slept.

The next winter, the flow of guests dried up. Possibly Jake didn't want another encounter with his son's socks. A better reason may have been that cars began to replace horse-drawn vehicles, such as sleighs, making it possible for the long journey from home to the destination across the river to be made in one day. A new era was beginning.

But old ways had a way of catching up. In the early 1930s, Annie, then in Grade 3, became very ill with a pain in her abdomen. Dr. Boris Batanoff, a local Russian doctor, diagnosed a ruptured appendix. The remedy was surgery, but the only hospital was Holy Family in Prince Albert, about 80 miles north, and the only transportation available in winter was by train. Jake carried Annie to the station, bundled in a comforter. Anna stayed home with the children and to keep the fires burning. Emergency surgery was performed in Prince Albert, with Jake returning the next day. The store needed him. Anna was beside herself with concern for her child near death in that faraway city. The only communication was through letters—and she didn't write English. The doctors didn't offer much hope, but operated anyway. Three weeks later, Jake returned to Prince Albert to bring Annie home, again by train. Jake paid the doctor's bill of $75 in cash and dismissed the matter. When years later, the doctor's estate was settled, among the debts was $75 owed by Jake Funk of Blaine Lake. Jake had no receipt or cancelled check, so he paid it again. His Russian habits of paying in cash only hadn't worked this time.

Communicable diseases such as scarlet fever, chicken pox, diphtheria, whooping cough, croup, and influenza were common before the era of inoculations and more rigid health standards. To hear a toddler with whooping cough try to find breath was terrifying. The common drinking cup in some schools, infrequent testing of water supplies, the

pail system of disposing of human wastes into what was referred to as the honey-wagon, and horse manure lying on streets and attracting flies contributed to the spread of these diseases. One year, we Funk children contracted measles at Christmas, German measles at Easter, and chicken pox in summer, one child bringing the disease home and infecting the other four.

One day, Dr. Batanoff noticed a strange area on the hand of a local farmer when he was in the store. He asked the man to come to his office for a better examination. The man refused. He had tried various skin lotions, to no avail. The doctor insisted. He and his family had come to Canada via China, where their several-year wait for visas had brought him in contact with all kinds of diseases, leprosy among them. A swab sent to the provincial department of health resulted in a diagnosis of that dreaded disease. Action was prompt in arranging for the man and his family to be shipped to a leper colony on an island off the coast of Newfoundland. Jake was asked to provide food for the family for the 10 days the train traveled across Canada. On the day of departure, the police arranged for the family to ride in one sleigh attached in tandem to another sleigh pulled by horses. Their home was burned. Great care was taken that no one touched the affected person or his belongings. This was leprosy, feared since biblical times, intruding into their new life.

Another dark spot in the 1930s were the rare letters Anna received from her relatives in Russia. A few letters reached Blaine Lake from her exiled sister and family in Siberia. Such letters always added another layer of heaviness to the burden of finding a better life as immigrants in Canada. Over time fewer letters arrived from this faraway land in our post office box as the Communist rule in Russia strengthened. Meanwhile, the Blaine Lake villagers plodded through the Depression years. When would this season of hardship end?

Sommaborscht

All these measurements are approximate. The idea is to bring in from the garden anything that is green and edible and turn it into a soup that is nourishing and inexpensive. My mother often made this soup in summer.

* * * * *

4–5 cups cubed potatoes
2 cups chopped sorrel
3 tbsp chopped green dill
1 cup chopped onion greens
1 cup sliced green beans
1 cup fresh peas in pod or shelled
2 cups chopped tender beet greens
A few sprigs fresh parsley
2 bay leaves
A few peppercorns
1 cup cream (approximately)
Water to cover
Salt to taste

When the potatoes are tender, add greens and peppercorns in a spice bag and continue cooking gently. Season to taste and serve hot. Don't forget to add sour cream before serving. Sometimes Mother poached an egg for each of us in it before adding the sour cream. Today I make a similar soup using canned chicken broth as a base and anything green and edible I can find in the supermarket.

18

How we became Canadians

One has to leave a place to appreciate it. A look back to the "dirty thirties" reveals as many bright spots as hand-me-downs, skimpy meals, struggles with crop failures, and agonizing over bills. It reveals clearly that the spirit always struggles not only to survive, but to find joy and satisfaction. It cannot be squelched. Furthermore, poverty didn't seem so terrible to us children, who didn't know that something better existed.

The 1930s represent the acculturation of our family to our adopted land. We became Canadians alongside the people of many nationalities living in our little world of Blaine Lake who also didn't sense what was changing. At some point, Jake and Anna quit thinking about the Old Country and accepted they would never again see the Dnieper River, the mill on the hill, and the house beside it. They would never visit graveyards where family members were buried. Their own bones would rot in Canadian soil. They could no longer look back. Their lot had been cast with the people in this small community. And no time did they do this as fully as Christmas.

Christmas

All Blaine Lake children looked forward to Christmas with great anticipation, just as children did in faraway Russia. Granted, it took very little at any time to overwhelm children born to parents living in this new climate and culture in the 1930s: We stood amazed at the hoarfrost-covered trees on the way to school in the morning. We listened eagerly for the jangle of sleigh bells on a horse-drawn cutter. We relished our first taste of Dream Cake, a wonderful concoction of shortbread and nuts liberally covered with icing and only served in homes with income. Next in line to near-heavenly experiences was the taste of Philadelphia cream cheese with bits of pineapple. It came in a tiny jar, and only entered

our home because the lid had loosened and Dad couldn't sell it. Equally unforgettable were the sight and sounds of the North Saskatchewan River breaking up in spring, ice floes madly crashing against one another as they rushed to Hudson Bay.

But Christmas was different. The season was so packed full of star shine and unrestrained joy—despite the meager economy—that the magic power of hope was sprinkled on everyone, rich or poor. An aura of peace and goodwill toward all mankind hovered over the struggling community for a little while, lifting it out of despair. The citizens, mostly immigrants in a new environment, moved closer to one another for spiritual warmth even as they shivered in buildings not built to withstand severe Canadian temperatures. All Depression children knew what Christmas was about, even if they didn't have the right words to talk about the incarnation of the Christ child. Without Christmas, life in those difficult days would have been a perennial, arid emptiness.

Early each Christmas season, our family gathered around the radio to listen to Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and pronounce it good. That ushered in the season. Drawing names in school, with a maximum of 25 cents to be spent on a gift, was equally exciting. For some families, even this was too much, so trinkets gleaned from china cabinets were wrapped and given away. Always a child hoped her name would be drawn by a rich child.

At Christmas, grownups wondered about next year's crop and about having enough money to pay mounting bills. Children hoped that maybe this year there would be enough for a store-bought dress or a bicycle. If children received something at any other time of the year, it was because they needed it. A gift received at Christmas was special. Christmas mittens were always brighter and warmer. Homemade toys like a jumping jig brought endless hours of amusement. We Funk children were not spoiled with having too much. Carols we learned like *Deck the Halls* and *Jolly Old St. Nicholas*, were new to Mother and Dad, except for those translated from German like *Stille Nacht Heilige Nacht,* but I don't recall any objections.

At the United Church, where we children went to Sunday school, a large Christmas tree lit with real candles stood proudly at the front of the church. The children marched, sang, and acted skit after skit, the green divider curtains opening and closing on cue—usually.

The closing act every year was the Christmas pageant, the *piece de resistance* with a full cast, one year commandeered by my sister Annie as production manager. She would have won a Tony, had they been available for church productions. Wise men, angels, shepherds, Mary,

Joseph, and baby Jesus—all characters were present. Behind the worn green curtain, there was much whispering and hushing as costumes were put on—kimonos and bathrobes for the holy family, wise men, and shepherds. Cheesecloth and tinsel adorned the angels. Sometimes the shepherd's towel turban loosened and fell around his neck, causing the young boy acute embarrassment. Other children forgot their lines, but it didn't matter. A *faux pas* committed at the Christmas concert wasn't really a mistake but revelation of the humanity Christ came to save.

The small church auditorium was packed and the excitement even more palpable when Santa bounced in at the end of the program in red suit, white beard, big stomach and big bag, with lots of "ho, ho, ho." He was deemed irreverent and irrelevant across the river in the Mennonite Brethren church, but in Blaine Lake he was a given. Children shrieked, babies wailed with fright, and adults laughed as Santa distributed sacks of candy and nuts to every child present.

Did anyone believe he was real? Hardly. Except for the youngest, the children all knew the man in the borrowed suit was some kid's father costumed and stuffed for the occasion with pillows. For a brief few moments on Christmas Eve this jolly Santa symbolized hope. The people had faced hardship, extreme cold, sometimes hunger during the previous year. They faced the prospect of another dry year without crops in a rainless land with grasshoppers springing up by the thousands to eat even the smallest blade of grass. Some had had to postpone getting an education or working in a job they enjoyed. Some wondered if this was the year the farm might be foreclosed. Subconsciously, every adult knew at times one must believe in the unreal to deal with reality. Poverty has a hundred faces, yet only one face—desperation. The reality is hardship and struggle. The unreal is joy and hope. But at Christmas these were interchanged.

Many villagers had come from countries troubled by the horrors of war. Jake and Anna had lived through a season of terror a brief 10 years before. For a little while, all those harsh memories disappeared in the wonderful camaraderie created by watching children reenact the Christmas story once again before returning to their daily problems: finding enough food to feed families and wood to stoke stoves. Maybe this coming year would be better. They plugged the spirit of Christmas into the cracks of their misery to keep out the reality of possibly another dismal crop year.

No one analyzed the event. Christmas was an experience of love and grace without measure or strings attached. Gifts were given because parents loved their children. No bartering for good behavior. The gifts

often meant sacrifice of time to make toys or clothes and of money needed for urgent household needs. These parents wanted their children to know happiness, if briefly. Yes, these were Depression times, but it was not the abject misery of the revolutionary times in Russia.

Winter

Life for Blaine Lake children was far from dull during the 1930s winters. To be among the first to glide out onto the newly-flooded rink in early winter with the music playing the romantic *The Skater's Waltz* over loudspeakers couldn't be rivaled. Jake and other fathers promoted keeping the open-air rink available even on Sunday afternoons so the teenage boys wouldn't hang around the café and be tempted to drink or smoke.

Blaine Lake held a mock coronation at the ice carnival in 1937. I am the princess on the left. The dresses were made of crepe paper and worn over snowsuits.

All boys, including very little ones, played hockey on the well-packed snow-covered streets in winter with frozen horse pucks. Not everyone could afford a real puck, and horse pucks were plentiful around the livery barns. The games were unorganized, lively, loud, using hand-me-down equipment, and, for anyone not having shin guards, an Eaton's catalog tucked into woolen socks served equally well. Skiing on Dick Rowe's hill offered an afternoon of invigorating exercise. No skis? A long piece of board with a piece of tin attached to the front made it down the hill. In winter, youngsters walked out of town about a ¼ mile, then caught a ride on the runners of a sleigh coming in. The driver willingly slowed down to allow them to jump on. If they fell off, they waited for another one. Homemade toboggans and sleds offered great fun. Nothing equaled being one of the few assigned to mark out a huge fox-and-hounds game in a field of fresh snow.

If it was too cold to go skating in the evenings, Lux Theater on Monday nights and Major Bowes Amateur Hour on Thursdays provided great radio listening pleasure. Parlor games were popular, including *Spin the Plate* and *Pin the Tail on the Donkey*. But no card games—too much like what the gamblers in the pool hall did. Those were still no-no's for Jake and Anna.

The next big celebration was Easter, which meant dyeing Easter eggs by the dozen—and eating them as well, almost by the dozen. Here Russian and Canadian customs stood side by side. In the Russian Baptist tradition, and also that of the Mennonites, Easter bread, or *paskje*, was prominent. The women brought these round decorated domed loaves to place at the altar in church on richly embroidered napkins. In the small entryway, the worshipers greeted one another with a joyous: *Christoss voskress* (He is risen!), to which the reply is: *Voistyno voskress* (He is risen indeed!), an inspiring exchange, echoing old ways of celebrating.

Then, before you knew it, school had finished for the year, and once you had done your daily household chores the time was yours. Two glorious months to choose your activities, with children on every block and no friend farther away than three.

Summer

Marjorie Fast's dugout at village edge was a tempting place for the boys to skinny-dip, even though she scolded them loudly when they dared to trespass on her property, sometimes even holding their clothing hostage until they promised to hoe her garden. Tramping out to the slough in spring to collect tadpoles was a day's adventure. In town, one could

wander to the Canadian National Railway's cattle holding pens to watch the livestock placidly chew their cud, unaware of their fate. My father had had his windmill but we had elevators close by where we could watch trucks dumping grain—when there was some. Tennis was appealing to a few—if you had a racquet. You also needed a ball, even one that barely bounced or had little fuzz left on it.

As early as 1908, R. Byron Horner, later Senator Horner, imported horses from large farms in the east and established a business breeding and selling animals in Saskatchewan. He recognized how essential horses were to the economic welfare of the agricultural community. It was almost breathtaking to see matched teams of massive Percheron and Clydesdale horses pull a wagon briskly down the road as if it were a toy. Once in a while, a large herd of 50–60 wild horses from the Alberta foothills galloped through the streets, herded by cowboys, to be corralled a short block from the Funk home. We children sat on the fence to watch broncos being broken and sold to local farmers. The more daring child plucked hairs from a horse's tail next to the fence to weave into a ring.

I doubt that in Russia little girls collected and played with paper dolls, mostly cut out of discarded mail order catalogues by the shoebox full, from *Baby Jane* to glamorous *Tillie the Toiler*. Yet we children, in our hunger for things, collected anything—bits of colored glass, ribbons, movie star pictures, cards with Bible verses, broken pencils.

For Valentine's Day, a heathen holiday, we made our own cards with melted wax and sugar. You counted your valentines several times to make sure your pile was bigger than those of classmates, and boasted if you received a lacy store-bought one that folded out.

Outside in the sand box next to the garage, we created ornate layer cakes out of dark mud and light-colored sand, or built miniature yards decorated with twigs and grass to simulate a garden. A whole afternoon could be spent on hands and knees trying to retrieve a copper coin spotted in a crack in the sidewalk. A quickly changing audience of children stood ready to take up the task if the original finder gave up. Life was never dull when you had the entire universe as a source of entertainment. Did children in Russia make mud birthday cakes?

The playhouse attached to our garage was a major setting for fun. I have wondered if we had a playhouse because Mother had seen one with curtains at the Schellenberg home when they first arrived in Canada. Here our Canadian soul was shaped most surely, bringing out our creativity. We five Funk children retreated to it all summer for make-believe excursions to far-off exotic countries. That little room with the slanting roof became anything we wanted it to be. One year it was our

flying machine *à la* Flash Gordon. We persuaded Mother to lock us in while we tried to survive without landing on earth with only the supplies we had brought on board, mostly carrots freshly pulled from the garden. That they were unwashed didn't matter. With Frieda or Annie at the controls—the end of an apple box into which various sized nails and screws had been partly hammered in—we flew dangerously low over trees and strange tropical creatures that growled at us as we passed.

In this lowly place the magnificent new language Esperene was created, primarily by Frieda and Annie. Frieda knew about Esperanto, the international language. We Funk girls knew we could invent a language, if not a better one, and began a glossary with A as in *Alba*, or ass. This foreign word allowed us to use a vulgarism without our parents knowing what we were giggling about. In our home we were limited to mild expletives like "swell, lousy, and gee." Esperene syntax was English, but the words had Latin endings because Frieda was studying Latin.

We would have read more if we had had books to read. With no public library, we were limited to what we could buy or borrow from friends. The Searle Grain Elevator sponsored a traveling library and pulled us forcefully into Canadian culture. A large crate of books arrived every three or more weeks, and it was a red-letter day for the child who happened to be present when the elevator manager pried open the crate and gave her first pick from its treasures.

Summer Saturday evenings in Blaine Lake were ultra-special. Every day in the northern hemisphere's summer is long—very long. On these evenings, Main Street, usually sluggish, moved into a quick step. Too impatient to travel by horse and wagon, a large group of people gathered at Paul Dutchak's farm home in the early evening for the trip to town in the back of his big truck. Few had real plans. They joined local residents to stroll the two main blocks, shopping, going to the movies, dancing, or hanging out in the pool hall. And visiting, mostly visiting. Most were hungry for human company after having spent the week working on the farm. This was Canada in all its glory.

The first Sports Day, or picnic, was held in 1912 and maintained thereafter as an annual event, drawing huge crowds with promise of a good time—lots of food, lively chatting, ringside seating to cheer for your favorite ball team, and participation in various races, from sack to three-legged. There was softball for women and hardball for men, and the rare treat of ice cream and soft drinks for everyone who had at least a nickel to spend. You licked your cone slowly, going round and round to catch every drip. For us Funk children, it was our only ice cream of the year, so we savored every delectable drop, even to the soaked tip of

the cone. Children had freedom to come and go without the usual questions being asked. Even Anna attended sometimes for a little while to walk around the grounds. How she and Jake reconciled this exuberant celebration of Canadian peoplehood with their conservative German-Russian reserve is unclear. Jake probably saw it as an opportunity to build good business relationships.

Chautauqua, a memorable slice of American and Canadian folklore, provided excitement for a week many summers in the 1930s. There was never much question whether we would be allowed to attend the touring tent meetings that set up on the fairgrounds and provided family entertainment of music, movies, and an educational program for an exciting evening. Jake had heard that it was sponsored by a Sunday school organization; therefore it had to be a worthwhile event. Sometimes the overt message was against drinking, which he supported for he often saw neighbors and friends succumb to alcohol abuse.

For five years, the Association of Commercial Travelers sponsored amateur hours in the Palace Theater in support of the TB League. For these exciting events, only the very elderly and the ill stayed at home. The whole community turned out to watch their own amateur musicians and would-be actors perform long enough to outlast the gong.

The provincial government set up cooking classes for young girls in an attempt to show homemakers how to make better use of available products. I was sent as the family representative for two weeks one summer to learn to cook in the United Church building under the tutelage of two women from the provincial Home Extension Office. They made plentiful use of farm products like milk, eggs, and vegetables, but it wasn't plain cooking, the kind you made without a recipe, but a step up—mayonnaise, blancmange, Eggs Benedict, and such foods not usually on Blaine Lake menus.

A never-to-be-forgotten event in the 1930s was the arrival of an airplane on the field next to the school grounds. Everyone rushed to see this wonder of the modern world for the first time. A young man of 16 or 17, big, dark, swarthy, attending one of the country schools, had fallen in love with the young teacher. When one night she refused to let him into her little house on the school property, he shot at her several times through the window, hitting her in the abdomen. When the children arrived the next morning, they discovered no fire had been lit and the schoolhouse icy cold. After repeatedly knocking on the teacherage door, they heard a faint voice calling for help. Behind a barricade of mattresses they found their teacher, bleeding from several bullet wounds. An air ambulance flew from Prince Albert for the first time in the history of

Blaine Lake to take her to a hospital. Pete D. was arrested and charged with manslaughter and given a three-year sentence because of his youth. The teacher recovered. But we had seen a real live plane.

After-school reel movies soon became regular events. For five cents, children were allowed past the gatekeeper into the classroom. Sitting two to a seat, we watched Jean Valjean struggle through the sewers of Paris and the beautiful Cosette hide behind a huge log, or some other film deemed educational. We Funk children were permitted to see these but not the commercial ones shown in the Palace Theatre—too worldly.

When Jake saw our fascination with school movies, he ordered a movie projector with reels for himself. The first one didn't work, so the company sent another one that had to be cranked by hand. "Isn't this better than educational movies at school?" was Jake's frequent comment as he showed nature films to his command audience of six. The animals ran fast or slowly depending on the endurance of the operator.

Before the movie projector, he had invested in a slide projector, with slide shows proliferating in his desk like field mice. Cars and radios, anything technical or mechanical, were Jake's necessity and fascination. One year, he brought home a *Polyphon*, a large music box with a 30 inch disc. When its novelty wore off, we turned it into a washstand, unaware that years later it would have brought thousands as an antique. He purchased musical instruments like guitars, mandolins, and once, a player piano. He wanted music, but preferably the kind he had heard in Russia. I think now there was an unrelenting hunger in his heart to feel again what he had felt in that country.

Sometime during the 1930s, the highly-publicized game Monopoly arrived in our tiny community. A few families bought it, drawing neighbors' children like moths to a flame. Under gas lamps in living rooms, blood pressures rose, tempers flared, and voices grew louder as would-be owners of property bought, tried to hang on, and eventually went bankrupt when they had to sell to pay debts—or it was time to go home. But for a brief moment they had been near millionaires, a feat to be talked about for weeks later.

Village leaders were concerned about their children. Every evening at 9 p.m., the curfew, a bell at first and later a siren, signaled children to quit playing and head home. Intense involvement in games like *Run my good sheep run*, *Kick the can*, and others—sometimes over most of the block, or several blocks—meant we forgot all concept of time. No one carried a watch. The curfew called us home, hot, sweaty, ready to outwit the other team the next night. In the early 1930s, the Royal Canadian

Mounted Police stationed a contingent in Blaine Lake. The men marched past our home often in their red jackets and striped pants and high, polished boots to the admiring glances of little children.

In this diverse culture, the children of the various ethnic groups mixed frequently not only at school but in other settings. This was a community without a history and precedents, so its own culture evolved with each family adding to it from its own distinctive ethnic background and taking to itself what it admired from the culture of others. School children learned to sing British songs like *The Minstrel Boy* and *Men of Harlech* and watch Scots do the Highland fling and the Doukhobors sing their long chants. People respected, as they expected to be respected in return.

Each family had to decide which of the Canadian folk customs, like Halloween, their children would be allowed to participate in. Jake and Anna said a firm no to dressing up in an outlandish ghost or witch costume and going door-to-door begging for treats. This custom was still too close to the kind of begging they had witnessed in Russia, with the lamed war veterans and neighboring peasants knocking on doors with gunny sacks slung over their shoulders pleading for food. Jake told us he would bring home treats from the store—but it wasn't the same. His resistance was worn down by the time the younger children had grown old enough to join their friends chasing down the streets to pick up lollypops, chewing gum, a piece of bologna at the butcher's, and sometimes a small tube of toothpaste at the druggist's store. I went trick-or-treating just once.

In the late 1930s, a school chorus drove to Saskatoon to sing in the music festival and then to the Capitol Theater to see Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald in *Girl of the Golden West*. It took a lot of persuading for Anna to allow us to participate, for we would be going into the realm of all that was considered sinful—the movie theater. But we had become accustomed to school movies. Dad had slide shows. We convinced her that this was a clean movie. She relented and consented. The movie was memorable, with gorgeous scenery and heart-shattering solos and duets by the stars, introducing us girls to the mystifying elements of romance.

There are those who believed that the Royal Visit of Queen Elizabeth and King George VI the week of June 3, 1939, had something to do with bringing the rains back to Saskatchewan. Their return ushered in a new decade, yet nearly a decade of living with need was never erased from the collective consciousness of those who survived. For some, it took until nearly the end of the war to regain financial stability and resources. The Depression years branded the children of this era with

indelible ink that reminded them for the next decades: Save the butter papers, use water sparingly, and cherish the bits of beauty that lay hidden in corners and little things. But most importantly, we were becoming real Canadians. The Russia of our parents' experiences seemed centuries behind us. Actually it was still part and parcel of our very being.

Matrimonial Cake

This cake, probably Scottish in origin, was a Canadian favorite and appeared at many social functions. Soon Mother and then we girls made it regularly. No worries about it flopping, like other made-from-scratch cakes sometimes did. Mixes were still unknown.

* * * * *

1¾ cups oatmeal
¾ cup margarine
1½ cups flour
1 cup brown sugar
½ tsp salt
Mix the dry ingredients, and then rub in the butter to make a coarse mixture.

Date filling:
1 pound dates cut up
½ cup brown sugar
Add about ½ cup water and boil in a saucepan until it thickens.

Pat half the oatmeal mixture in the bottom of cake pan, spread the date filling over it, and add the rest of the oatmeal mixture. Bake about 35 minutes at 350 degrees.

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A new land needs new ways of "neighboring"

As early as 1932, the John Kovals, Jake Funks, and John Nesdolys started holding services in winter in their homes for the Russian Baptists while we children attended the United Church Sunday school. In summer, it was time to switch gears to another mode of worshiping. In late spring, Jake took the car off the blocks, filled it with gas, and checked the tires several times. The first sunny Sunday after the river ice was gone and the ferry was back in operation—and there were many such Sundays in the dry 1930s—Jake drove the family to Laird, Hepburn, or Brotherfield, to a Mennonite Brethren church, never a Mennonite church. The isolation of the long winter was over.

There was ritual preparation for Sundays, a holdover from Russia. In addition to cleaning the house, we children spent agonizing hours on Saturday learning to read the Sunday school lesson and memorize a Golden text in High German, which required coaching from Anna.

Saturday was also HAIR DAY in the Funk home—washing, rinsing, waving, curling. In Russia, the custom for girls had been to pull their hair neatly back, braided if you were young, or twisted into a bun if you were older. A few waves in front were acceptable—but never loose hair. Although Anna could never bring herself to cut her hair, she bowed to a little style. Did she ever consider what the elder in the village of Rosenthal would have said? But then, this was Canada. On Saturdays, Frieda or Annie waved her hair in addition to their own, using gloppy gel made from boiled linseed. When dry, it had the texture of cement baked in the sun all day. Her bun remained until she died at nearly age 99.

When we were younger, someone, possibly sister-in-law Elizabeth in Hague, showed her how to twist hair in rags so that ringlets, fat little sausage-like curls, Shirley Temple style, graced our heads for a little while

the next day. For years, this was a nightly ritual before school days—sitting at Mother's lap on a little stool as she turned and twisted. Frieda was the first of us Funk girls to get a machine permanent from the beauty operator downtown, which Anna staunchly defended from criticism from the Mennonite objectors across the river. Frieda had to work in the store on Saturdays and had no time that day to wash her hair like the girls across the river did.

Another concession to Canadian style was a hat. Married women in Russia wore a *haube*, a little black bonnet/bow type arrangement. Anna always wore a hat in public. Her conditioning was strong that married women should show their status with a covering of some kind. But suitable hats were hard to find in Blaine Lake stores, so they were ordered from Eaton's catalogue—and sometimes returned if she didn't think they looked right. Too bold, too colorful. "How does it look?" she asked us girls as she tried it on. Jake had courted her when she wore a broad-brimmed green hat atop her auburn hair. Was she trying for the same effect?

Another Saturday task was to prepare a picnic lunch for Sunday after church, usually a *Jell-O* fruit salad, egg salad sandwiches, crumb cake, and cold tea (ice was unheard of), with enough extra to bring to whichever home at which we ate *faspa*. We didn't know where that might be, but lunch on our own allowed time to decide, certain an invitation would come from someone. A Mennonite housewife was expected to have baked a never-ending supply of *tweeback* on Saturday, enough for her family and guests. Anna, always concerned about being a burden to a hostess, often brought a chocolate cake with heavy frosting and date filling, a rare treat for some of these across-the-river children.

After breakfast, Jake swung the car gate wide, drove out the car, closed the gate, and we were off, very early in the morning. Anna always sat with her left arm extended behind her, holding the rear door latch so no child would fall out. Even in the McLaughlin Buick, purchased from Abram Schellenberg who had acquired a newer model, the family over-filled the vehicle. Jakie or Susie sat on Anna's lap in the front, with three girls in the back seat and one child on a box of food serving as a jump seat. Tablecloth, cups, plates, and blankets were packed into the box on the running board or into the corners of the back seat.

On the way, we sang together, a memorable experience, folk songs like *Little Brown Church in the Valley*, Jake's favorite *Kernlieder,* core hymns of the Mennonite faith*,* and *Heimatlieder* about a better home in heaven—comfort songs during the difficult revolutionary times. The *Russlaender* Mennonites in Canada were still reminded of those harsh times while

adjusting to new living conditions. We usually arrived at church before anyone else, although we had the farthest to travel. The churchyard still had more horse-drawn wagons and buggies than cars. Anna would always pack the four girls' sashes, heavily starched and ironed, in a separate box so they would arrive in pristine condition. There were never many clothes to choose from, but each child had everyday clothes and a Sunday dress. Each sash was carefully tied on arrival at church, a nickel pressed into each hand, before our family marched into the meetinghouse, a simple small frame white building with small foyers for men and women.

On the way to the Laird Mennonite Brethren Church. Dad took the picture of us in front of the Eigenheim Mennonite Church (ca. 1940). Left to right: Jakie, Katie, Anna with her Sunday hat, Frieda, Annie, and Susie.

Seating was still the old way. Everyone had special seats, with the old men near the front on the right and the rest of the men behind them. On the left sat the children in front and girls and women behind them, with mothers with infants at the back near the entrance, ready to head for the women's entry room. The men's routine on entering the building was to hang their hats in the tiny foyer and shake hands with each man, and then again with each man in the pew.

Jake always came prepared to preach. As lay minister, he was expected to always have "a word from the Lord." He traveled with sermon notes in his Bible. Did he think back to the day in south Russia when he and Gerhard Schroeder had traveled by foot to various outlying areas to preach the gospel to Mennonites? He enjoyed expounding the

Word of God as he saw it, and did so with much emotion. The better preachers pounded the pulpit and shouted the important parts. His messages were usually evangelistic, although at this time apocalyptic sermons were not uncommon. He didn't delve much into that kind of teaching. He preached in German in Laird and Russian in Blaine Lake and never made the switch to praying and preaching in English.

After church came Sunday school, an agony if the teacher taught in German. In Blaine Lake, we Funk children excelled in school. In Laird, we stumbled along trying to read the German Bible text out loud. The Laird children read fluently. I always dreaded this reading. One day the teacher said, "Katie, today you can read in English." I never forgot his kindness. He put love ahead of language. I blessed him forever after.

Picnicking at the side of the road while traveling (ca. 1936).

Often, after eating lunch in the back pews or on the church grounds, we children investigated the small cemetery. A section had been devoted to infants' graves. In the 1930s, "summer complaint," or gastroenteritis, was a frequent illness of young children and infants, as well as communicable diseases like whooping cough, diphtheria, and scarlet fever. Many families had buried one or two children in this area. Caskets were homemade and funerals simple, gravestones nothing but a wooden cross when there was no money for permanent markers.

If the skies looked sunny, we headed to one farm home or another to spend the afternoon visiting, that beloved Mennonite pastime, recalling the golden years in Russia and finding out about relatives still

living there. To visit a farm was a treat for us children. It meant examining cows, pigs, horses, and chickens in their habitat. It also meant the rare experience of looking for eggs in the grass and burrowing into deep pig tunnels in the haystacks, emerging sweaty and dusty but triumphant. In the evening, Funk children and host parents exchanged places, with the children riding by Bennett wagon to church while the adults traveled by car. With breezes blowing dust in clouds behind them, we children watched the horses' huge haunches shift side-to-side, occasionally erupting "brrp" with a burst of gas. Fascinating stuff for village-bred children who never watched nature in its most primitive state.

Except for a few farm households, even I as a child noticed how poverty had taken a firm hold in some households. It made me feel rich. Money was tight in our household, but there was always lots of plain food. I recall one occasion when a pigeon dinner with the roaster filled with about 40 little bodies was served at one home across the river—reminding Jake how pigeons once became gourmet food during the starvation years in Russia.

A wisp of a cloud in the sky in the early afternoon brought worry lines to Jake's forehead. Saskatchewan mud was a killer to a driver, the heavy clay on the riverbanks daring any car to traverse the roads to the top successfully. If the rain caught up with them, Anna sitting in the front seat with Susie on her lap uttered stern admonitions of "*Kinder, seid still*," her left hand holding the rear car door handle even more tightly. Jake hugged the hill side of the road to prevent slipping off the edge into the ravine below. Roads were only graded soil packed down by traffic. If the engine stalled on the steep incline, everyone got out. Jake pulled on his coveralls and hauled out the chains. No Saskatchewan driver left home without them. Anna discreetly undid her garters and took off her stockings and shoes to place stones in the heavy mud behind the rear wheels, giving the car traction. The family always made it home, despite some tense moments with the children anguishing along the hillside on a tuft of grass and Jake and Anna working to make that beast pull its weight. On rare occasions, a team of horses was drawn in to help.

During the summer, our social world expanded to include occasional family reunions with Jake's relatives across the river in Hague and Saskatoon. Nearly all had cars by now. Men came in pleated pants, white shirts, ties, and suspenders, except for Nick, who never wore a tie. These reunions always included lots of conversation, subtle putdowns, picture-taking, sometimes by a professional photographer, and Jake handing out chocolate bars. "They sure liked my rolls," was Anna's

comment after everyone left, fingering their delicate texture, out of satisfaction that she hadn't lost the touch.

Ready for a week of camping at nearby Martin's Lake (ca. 1940).

Grandma Susanna Funk was now living in the tiny Mennonite village of Hague, which had a number of outlying settlements peopled by ultra-conservative Old Colony Mennonites who had arrived in Canada in the 1870s. Her long, low house was still like a bit of transplanted Russia, unpainted, long, overgrown with hollyhocks and lilac bushes and the traditional backless bench leaning against the ridged wall by the front door.

The first years after coming to Canada, Grandma Funk had lived in Saskatoon making a home for the three youngest boys, Abe, Nick, and Henry. After Liese and her husband moved to Hague, she moved there also and took in at-risk pregnant women so that they could be near a doctor. She eventually purchased this long, low frame house, divided into three units, and lived in the front section, facing the street, so she could watch the villagers coming and going to town. The middle section was rented to young men working in Hague, and the third section to various people. Some years later, she received a government pension, very small, and Jake Funk and her son-in-law Abe Friesen quietly stepped in and helped with major expenses.

She loved the brief missives Jake sent her regularly stating the weather, the health of the family, and wishes for her good health. Granddaughter Eileen reports she saved silver fifty-cent coins in a small

cloth bag hidden in a wooden chest. Like Jake, she did not trust banks and was concerned there might come a time when paper money would be worthless, as it had been in Russia. At some point, a family meeting agreed on how to support Grandma Funk: Each of her children pledged $5 per month, a lot of money in the pre-war years, but it was Jake in Blaine Lake and Abe, Liese's husband in Hague, who provided as needed.

Grandma Susanna Funk's home in Hague, Saskatchewan (1949)

She always wore a long, black dress with a long white apron stretched over her fat stomach that jiggled when she laughed. Her dark hair, slightly graying, was pulled tightly back and pushed into a small doughnut bun, making her round face look even fatter and rounder. If it wisped loose, she pulled out her backcomb and combed it through the front collecting the errant hair, leaving ridges like a newly plowed field. Even after living several decades in Canada she spoke little English. Living in a Low German village, she didn't need it.

Grandma Funk sometimes came to Blaine Lake for a week at a time. Jake was still her favorite son. Anna brought food whenever they visited

her and Jake left money behind. Anna brought food whenever the Funk family visited anywhere, especially to those who didn't have as much food as she had.

Grandma Susanna Funk, center front, at one of our family gatherings (ca. 1942).

On a rare Sunday, the family got up extra early to drive far north to Glenbush or Mullingar to renew friendships with former friends from Bethania. The hunger to reconnect with the former friends was always strong. The car followed mile after mile of narrow dirt roads north, twisting and turning through bush country. The family ate breakfast on the way—sandwiches and such things, with lemon tea in a two-quart jar.

Anna was slowly adopting some British foods, such as matrimonial cake, oatmeal cookies, shortbread, butter tarts, and Lady or Lord Baltimore cakes, all so unlike the food she had made in Russia. However, hamburger meat was always made into good-sized meatballs or meatloaf, never stir fried. Casseroles likewise never became part of her repertoire. It was beneath her to mix foods. Her favorite medium of expression was yeast dough, a skill she had perfected as head cook at Bethania Hospital in Ukraine, so on Saturdays our cupboards were loaded with buns, cinnamon rolls, and *plauts*. Bread was baked during the week.

In the eyes of Jake and Anna Funk, teachers held the same revered role as they had in Russia. The "authority of the teachers" was well-drilled into their children. They knew more. They had more authority because of their position, as well as knowledge. Teachers had authority to reprimand and punish, but also to encourage. Therefore when young

Susie refused to chew her food and swallow it, instead pasting it to the roof of her mouth and sucking until it was gone, Annie was appointed to ask the teacher to tell Susie to drink more milk and not to suck her food. Teachers in the early years never became close friends—only people to be respected.

High tea for teachers, a new custom to Anna, was a daring new departure from Russian ways, and yet it was only an Anglicized version of *faspa*, that beloved Mennonite tradition. It meant the house was cleaned more thoroughly than the usual Saturday scouring. The menu for the upcoming social event was reworked several times. Once, at the last moment, she withdrew watermelon because she feared her "English" teacher guests might consider it an insult. Slavic residents were accorded lower social status in the community, and teachers in the early years were all British, so watermelon that Russians and she loved was taken off the list. Russians, Ukrainians, and Doukhobors were not hired as teachers by some school districts, so some changed their names to appear more English. Buzowetsky became Cameron, Nazaroff became Alexander. Despite the name change, a few teachers showed up at their new school with a strong Russian accent.

Then there were visitors to our modest little home who weren't really visitors: The Bethany Bible Institute students were taught to view the people on the Blaine Lake side of the North Saskatchewan River as heathens in need of salvation. Blaine Lake may have had drunken brawls at times, and it boasted a pool hall or two, but it was a religious community with Doukhobors, Catholics, United Church, Anglican, Russian Baptists, and other undefined religions present. It was just that they weren't all like these across-the-river students in their theology, who came by the dozen to the numerous country schools to conduct vacation Bible school for a week, mostly two weeks at a time with a closing program, often stopping at our home for a meal and a sauna bath, before heading out into the harvest fields of the Lord once again. The United Church building was the site for one Blaine Lake VBS.

What do you call what happens between neighbors? The over-the-fence sort of visiting? This was friendship at its best. The Zarchikoffs' two-story box had been torn down, and Steve Protz built a house on the site for $46—small, substantial—and a blacksmith shop beside it. He was a blacksmith; his wife was 16, jolly, good-natured, not much older than Frieda. She helped him with his work. He heated the metal rims of wagon and buggy wheels to put back on the wooden spokes by building a fire around the rim outside; he poured kerosene on the logs, and when the metal was hot, hollered to Kashka to come hold the wheel down with

clamps as he slammed his heavy metal sledgehammer on it. We girls loved to sit in her kitchen enjoying girl-talk, even though it smelled heavily of onions, cabbage, and garlic.

The Zbitnoffs on the other side were gentle, quiet neighbors, smiling at us children, talking to Anna on occasion, and never complaining if we reached farther into the raspberry bush than the fence dictated was ours.

The letters from Russia ended in the late 1930s. Their harsh, sad news no longer entered the Funk home, and Anna could only imagine what was taking place in the lives of her siblings, especially the ones in Siberia. It would take years before she found out.

Rollkueaken

In Russia, and later, in Canada, a favorite meal on a hot day was a simple one—huge slices of juicy, red watermelon accompanied by rollkueaken fresh from the frying pan. Nothing more was needed. Mother seldom used a recipe for the fried delicacy other than as a general guide—never for exact measurements. Here is a well-tested recipe from an old cookbook.

* * * * *

4 cups flour
2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
1 cup sour cream
1 cup milk
4 eggs

Sift flour with salt and baking powder in a good-sized mixing bowl. Make a well and add the rest of the ingredients, mixing well with hands. Turn onto a flour board, roll out in 2 by 4 inch strips, cut two slits in each strip, and fry in deep fat, turning when one side is browned. Serve with watermelon or syrup or jam.

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Church turf wars in Blaine Lake

I would like to omit this chapter, but I believe it is important to keep it in for the sake of a complete record. In an earlier chapter, I wrote about the Flemish/Frisian, Mennonite Brethren/*Kirchliche*, rich/poor, and Molotschna/Rosenthal conflicts—some major, some minor. Faith and church were important to Jake and Anna from before they first met. In Russia, Jake had experienced a sudden and harsh excommunication from the Mennonite Brethren Church after he had left the *Kirchliche* Mennonites to join this newer, more openly evangelical, group of believers. He was accepted into the *Allianz* church, but returned to the Mennonite Brethren when he came to Canada because, of the churches in the area, it was the most comfortable fit for him and Anna.

In the little village of Blaine Lake, church adherence remained an enigma to him as several denominations drifted around looking for a home in an area where there weren't many strong leaders or followers of any one persuasion. In different periods, Russian Baptists, German Mennonite Brethren, Russian Mennonite Brethren, and Doukhobors worshiped together. His closest fellowship during his years here was with the Russian Baptists and Russian MBs in the area.

I am not sure whether it is possible to accurately describe the complexities of the Russian Baptist/Mennonite Brethren Church turf wars. According to records,[26] Herman Fast, a Mennonite who taught the Russian language in the Petrofka school, built in 1906 by the Quakers, also held gospel services in homes and in the school. In 1907, six Slavic families from one village in Russia arrived in Saskatchewan and filed for homesteads south of Blaine Lake. They lived in the Doukhobor village

[26] See Mary Ciona et al., eds., *Blaine Lake 1912–1962: Golden Jubilee* (1962); Blanche Crowder, ed., *Bridging the Years: Era of Blaine Lake and District, 1790–1980* (1984); and Kevin Koop, *Blaine Lake Gospel Chapel Centennial Celebration, 1912–2012* (2012).

of Troitska (Trinity) for six months while they improved their lands and built homes.

The first converts in this gospel outreach program were William Wasilenko, Nick Makaroff, and Paul Makaroff. Were they MBs or Baptists? That's not clear. At this time, denominational loyalty wasn't important. During the migration from Russia, the extended Makaroff family and other Doukhobors were assisted financially and morally by Count Leo Tolstoy and the Quakers who had preceded them to this region. Before the Petrofka school was built, some Quaker families in New York and Pennsylvania sponsored some Doukhobor children in their eastern schools, including Peter Makaroff, the first Doukhobor lawyer.

Mennonite Brethren young people from across the river held services in the Petrofka school during summer for many years. Peter and Agatha Makaroff and others enjoyed the services. Their children attended vacation Bible school. Agatha's father told her and her husband to read the New Testament, which they did once they had a family of their own. Through that reading, they accepted Christ as Savior. Nicholas and Masha (Mary) Makaroff joined the Mennonite Brethren Church, although they remained followers of the teachings of Leo Tolstoy and continued their association with the Doukhobors and the Quakers, which probably indicated they were Independent Doukhobors rather than the ultra-traditional ones who opposed education and burned schools in the area later on during the early 1930s. So at this point, denominational differences were muddy. At the time it didn't matter. There were too few people to count in separate groups.

When people who attended these services began moving from the Petrofka village, near the North Saskatchewan River, to their own farms, they decided to build a church in the country. Wasyl Wasilenko and his brother-in-law, Nicholas Boulanoff, each donated an acre of land adjacent to each other in the Harmonia School District. Although local volunteers provided the labor, financial difficulties prevented completion of the church until 1912–1913, when monetary help came from the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Saskatchewan across the river. Later on, this building was found to be titled in the name of the Saskatchewan MB Conference after it was moved into the town of Blaine Lake. Sometimes visiting ministers conducted services; other times, laymen of the district took turns.

In 1918, Wasyl Wasilenko was ordained as minister and Paul Makaroff as deacon of this congregation. But what denomination was it? In essence probably more Russian Baptist than Mennonite Brethren at

the time. Wasilenko conducted services until 1924 with district laymen substituting in his absence. Non-members attended services as well, which shows their appreciation of having a place to worship nearby. Faith was an important part of their lives as new settlers, so while living in the area, some walked approximately seven miles to attend worship services held in the Petrofka school (built by Quakers) led by Herman Fast and John Shakatko. According to what my father told me, some of these Russian members, like John Nesdoly, who worked for him in the store for several decades, and brother Timothy Nesdoly, had been Mennonite Brethren already in Ukraine. The religious life of the area resembled a tossed salad.

After these Russian Baptist families built better houses, they first gathered for Sunday worship services in their homes. In 1917, they built their first church seven miles south of Blaine Lake with Rev. Nestor Nesdoly as pastor. Now there were two rural congregations. Six years later, in 1924, the Wasilenko family moved to California, and Mennonites and Baptists joined hands to form the Baptist Mennonite Union church, holding services at the small rural Mennonite church. At the time, the people didn't know the fine differences between one kind of a Mennonite and another. They were all under one classification: Baptist Mennonite.

In 1924, these two congregations joined into one and built a larger sanctuary with Rev. George Buzowetzky as pastor for many years.

Already beforehand, the young people of both the Mennonite Brethren Church at Petrofka and the Russian Baptist Church got together for choir practices and youth activities. When young people from the two churches intermarried, as was inevitable, some disagreements occurred as to which church would get the young couple. Finally, Alexander Nazaroff suggested the two congregations join. They agreed to unite but lacked clarity about where services would be held. The central location for the members was the littler building out of town. The new, united congregation was called the Baptist MB Church, and services were held in the rural building for a time.

After a while an even larger building was erected to hold the growing membership. I can remember often attending church services in this second building. The preaching was vigorous, and the large choir, with its Russian overtones, memorable. Sometimes revival meetings were held in it, with MB ministers from the across the river as preachers.

From the beginning, this now predominantly Baptist group was affiliated with the English Western Baptist Union. They separated from it in 1932 while still clinging to their Baptist identity. They weren't about

to give that up. Their Mennonite Brethren attachments were getting weaker as stronger Baptist voices emerged. They reorganized and registered under a separate charter: The Russian Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist Union, with Rev. Nestor Nesdoly as president and pastor. When he moved to Saskatoon, John Koval became acting pastor until 1971, when his health failed and John Wasilenko took over the pastoral duties.

John Koval, a gentle soul, operated a shoe and harness repair shop on Main Street, which later expanded to a General Store, and then, in 1954, to a grocery store. Many a time I entered his little shoe repair shop with a pair of shoes to be resoled. He spoke little English, so he said little, mostly nodding his head, and smiling quietly, finally writing something on the soles of the shoes and adding them to the dozens of shoes and boots in need of repair on the shelf behind him. He always remembered every shoe's owner.

As mentioned, in 1932, a few years after my parents arrived in Blaine Lake, during the winter months when travel to the Mennonite Brethren church across the river was impossible, the Kovals, the John S. Nesdolys, and my parents held services in their homes on Sunday mornings. At the same time, we children attended the United Church Sunday school, an amalgam of Methodists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans. Blaine Lake was not a place for purists then.

On Sunday morning, Jake dusted the snow off the benches stacked next to the house and carried them in. Anna covered them with blankets to ward off the chill and stoked the living room heater. For a few hours, our humble living room became holy ground. Often we children returned home from Sunday school to find the service still in progress, so we waited in the kitchen for *babushkas* in shawls and their heavily clad husbands to leave and our noon meal to be served. The Russians loved long services with many sermons and much singing and praying. And visiting.

Years later, in 1991, Mercedes C. wrote Jake and Anna: "When I think of Mr. and Mrs. Funk in Blaine Lake, I see their home—the living room with a stove in the middle, benches on all four sides, with grandmas and grandpas sitting on them. It must be that Grandpa and Grandma Larion Strelioff were there and I, a five or six-year-old at the time, was with them, playing around the warm stove (heater)." Those long-ago house church gatherings remained a warm memory for her.

After the lumberyard behind our house burned down, the three lots that it had occupied were vacant. Jake wanted to buy them, but the other lumberyard, which owned them, wouldn't sell to him for fear lest another rival lumberyard set up business. So Jake Funk approached G.W. Peters,

chairman of Western Children's Mission (WCM), who came to Blaine Lake regularly to oversee the vacation Bible school teachers distributed in the area for the summer, to buy the property as an interdenominational agency for $25 per lot ($75). Jake's idea was that the WCM would send workers to the area.

In my childish mind, I couldn't understand why the people across the river saw all of Blaine Lake as pagan, not realizing there was a strong core of sincere Christians who worshiped in Russian rather than English, and had done so for years. Was this what made them suspect as true believers and in need of salvation?

Two key WCM workers were Ben Kroeker and Jacob H. Janzen. They taught VBS in the United Church and lived in our playhouse, sleeping on an old Toronto couch for the two weeks they were in town. After I had gone to the front at a revival service in the Russian Baptist Church out of town, Ben Kroeker sent me a long, very pious letter that I couldn't understand, and eventually threw away. It began "Dear sister in the Lord," which I thought strange. It was my first introduction to the special "God" language used by conservative evangelicals.

According to Jake, the next concern of this small local group of Baptists and MBs and a few Doukhobors was to haul the small Mennonite Brethren church from the country to these lots. But where was the title for the building standing empty in the countryside? Finally it was found in the local bank under the name of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches for the Western Children's Mission. The MBs didn't know they held title to the little church, so they sent a couple of dignitaries from across the river to verify ownership. Yes, it was theirs.

The little MB church building was pulled into town—almost. All winter it stood on a side road, sort of like the Ark of Covenant in the Old Testament. In spring it was delivered the rest of the way. In the meantime, the Western Children's Mission dissolved and was taken over by the Saskatchewan MB Conference by default. The little Russian church was now unexpectedly registered as a bona fide MB church.

This unexpected legal rearrangement of ownership was the beginning of a serious conflict between Jake Funk and John Koval, and within the congregation. Jake wanted to maintain dual membership—Mennonite Brethren/Baptist. Koval favored a Baptist identity, since there were more of them. Some Mennonite Brethren leaders from across the river couldn't understand the need to maintain dual membership. They wanted to raise the "MB flag," according to Jake. At a meeting to discuss the matter, one MB minister is reported to have said: "Either we

build an MB church or we do nothing." Another said, "Either things move ahead here as MBs or they break." The MBs wanted to force their organizational structure on the church, which had operated well as a union church for some time.

Koval, faithful shoe repairman/preacher, walked out of the meeting in protest. He thought Jake would support MB ownership and leadership because he was MB. If only he knew how un-MB Jake was. Jake desperately wanted a union church with joint ownership and both Baptist and Mennonite Brethren in the official name. Rev. J.H. Epp, principal of Bethany Bible School, agreed to stick up for a union church as long as he was able, but the next year he was voted out of the MB Conference board and so his support was gone.

At one meeting, in an attempt to pour oil on troubled waters, a visiting minister from across the river asked all Mennonites to stand. Everyone stood up. "You haven't understood me. All Baptists stand up." Everyone stood up again. The congregation considered themselves both Mennonites and Baptists. They were a homogenized body. The people across the river couldn't understand this. You were either one denomination or another—not both. The Russian Baptist members couldn't understand why their identity and contributions to the church were unofficially being shoved out the door. They were chagrined and disappointed.

The church needed an ordained minister to officiate at ritual events like funerals and marriages. Jake wanted Koval ordained, but the broader Baptist organization wouldn't ordain a lay minister and the MBs wouldn't ordain a Baptist. So the Blaine Lake group decided to ordain Koval themselves. Rev. D.B. Wiens, an MB missionary to the Russians at Eagle Creek/Arelee, agreed to officiate at the ordination of John Koval in 1953.

In 1954, the Mennonite Brethren Conference sent Rev. Peter Esau to minister in the church. He visited nearly every family within a radius of 30 miles. More people began to attend, and soon the church was too small to accommodate the growing congregation. He petitioned the Saskatchewan MB Mission Board for funds to enlarge the church. It was unable to give as much as needed, but gave some. Lumber was purchased from the sawmill at a nearby Indian reserve. A basement measuring 26 feet by 32 feet was dug for the addition. Esau worked alongside local people and volunteer workers from the neighboring Mennonite Brethren churches. The church was enlarged to 26 feet by 54 feet. The completion of the church was celebrated with a day of thanksgiving with Rev. Esau speaking in English and Rev. Koval in Russian.

Usually Koval had been the upfront leader and Jake had worked from behind in a close bond. But with time, as he became more comfortable in his position, Esau, a Mennonite Brethren, asserted himself and pushed MB interests more and more. The Russian Baptist element felt slighted. This, after all, had also been their church since the beginning, and was now being taken over by the German MBs. Jake felt he was being made the scapegoat as people pushed and shoved, destroying the sensitive inner structure of the union Baptist/Mennonite church. As people took sides, some of Jake's Russian brethren deserted him. They assumed that because he was a German MB, he was against them and for the MBs, disregarding the fact that he had been on their side for decades and had lived among them as friend and brother.

The Blaine Lake Russian Baptist Church in the country, seven miles out of town.

In October 1965, Jake wrote a letter to *The Canadian Mennonite* that shows some of his heartache about the lack of unity in this strange mixture of denominational loyalties: *Before the first war a group of Russian Baptists came to Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan, from Kiev, Russia. They built a small church. The Western Baptist Mission for many years put Russian workers in that church to work among the Russian people. Among them were the ministers Nestor Nesdoly, Kindrad, Chemeta, Shakatko, etc. Many people were added to the church.*

Sometime later a Mennonite Brethren Russian congregation organized and they too built a small church. Both groups got along fine for a time. Then intermarriage took place—an MB husband, a Baptist wife, and vice versa—and friction over church attendance began within families.

Each church emphasized too much selfish religion. Hard feelings and unrest divided the brethren. A wall of separation like in Berlin got higher and higher. A Peace Corps man, Mr. Alexander Nazaroff, conductor and music teacher in the church, got the young people to unite behind him. He called a meeting in no-man's-land. Both churches, tired of separation, united to become one Baptist-Mennonite Brethren Union Church. This group together built the Baptist church much larger, adding a full basement. They elected one Baptist and one Mennonite trustee. They called themselves the Baptist-Mennonite Union Church, and thus registered their name. The church had peace. God blessed it, and it grew again. Everybody was happy.

Then the Western Children's Mission from Hepburn, an interdenominational organization, came in to work and had very good success under the leadership of Rev. G.W. Peters and Ben Kroeker. Many got saved and are still serving the Lord. It was well accepted as such.

The MB mission came in to do mission work. Everybody helped to move the long-abandoned and closed-down MB church from the country into the town. Baptists and Mennonites repainted it, inside and outside, bought chairs and put in electric lights, etc. The church grew again and soon it was too small.

Then the Canadian MB mission donated $3,000 to build the church bigger. Another $2,000 was collected in Blaine Lake with free labor under the leadership of Rev. P. Esau.

The Baptists were promised that it would stay as the Baptist Mennonite Union Church. All helped with free labor and money contributions. The MB mission proceeded to put their own workers in to work among the Russian people. This wasn't well accepted. The church stopped growing, getting smaller and smaller instead.

The Mennonites were blamed by the Baptists that the MB board was emphasizing religion too much in the mission work with the aim or intention to make it an MB church. This violated the union agreement of the Baptist Mennonite Union Church which reads as follows: "…never to stress selfish religion." For that reason the Baptists separated. They claimed that we Mennonites broke the agreement and that they were free to separate, since they couldn't stay as partners or adherents.

Now Blaine Lake believers are separated into two churches on Sunday. We were together for over 40 years.

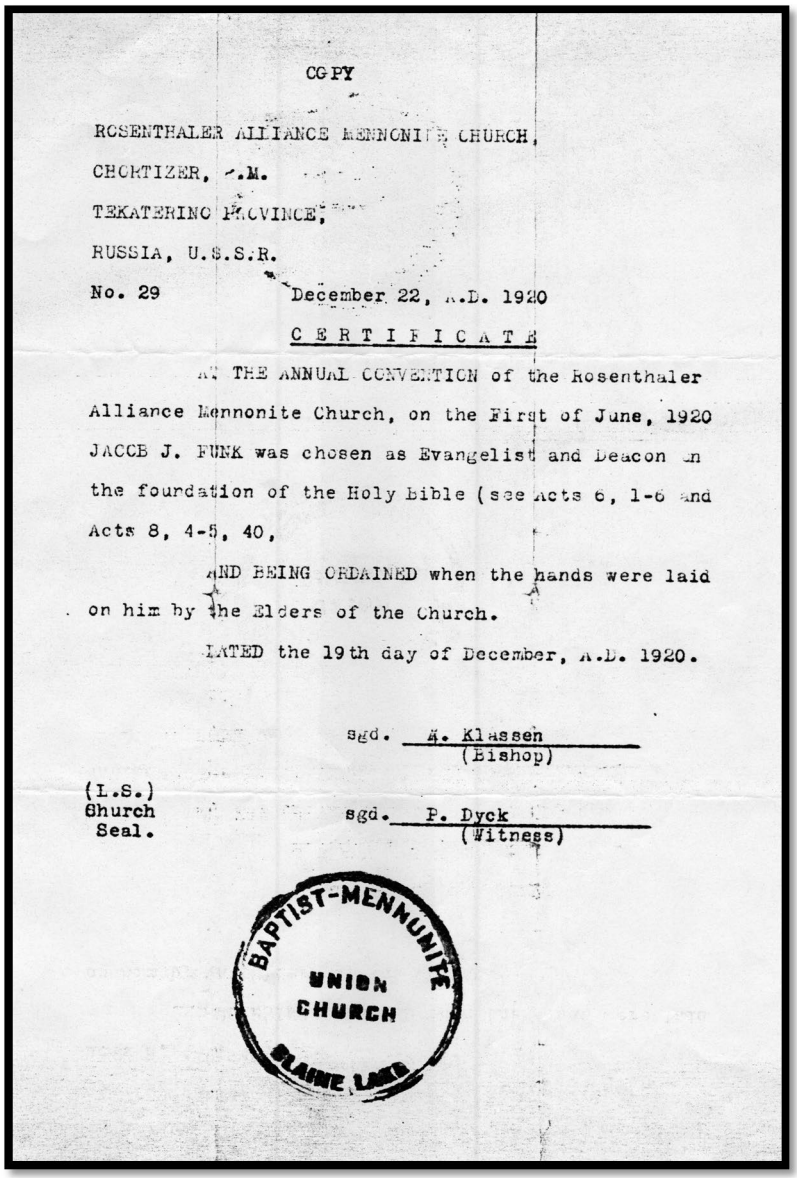
Jake closed with a rhetorical question no longer readable because of the low quality of the photocopy in my file. He asks something like, "Was Menno Simons a dissenter?" I am now convinced that my father was thinking back to the time in Russia at the Evangelical Mennonite *Allianz* Church, where they managed to get along, even with minor differences.

After Jake wrote this report of the mixed-up conditions, two Hepburn MB men came to discuss it with Jake and Anna. The men's mouths fell open, Jake reported, as they heard this view of the local people wanting a Mennonite Brethren-Russian Union church, not a

Mennonite Brethren church. They had prayer together before the men left.

The Laird Mennonite Brethren Church, across the river from Blaine Lake.

Years later, in an effort to rebuild broken bridges, Jake returned to Blaine Lake to ask John Koval for forgiveness. Jake had been rejected as a boy because of his ill-perceived handicap, so when he saw how severely Koval felt rejected, he was also deeply hurt and didn't know how to make amends when MB hierarchies, some of which he had invited, moved in and made decisions. He had a strong vision of loyalty first to God, and was usually a silent dissenter towards compromised forms of Christianity. He picked up inconsistencies with the sensitivity of a radar speed gun. Koval, who now owned a general store, walked away. A long friendship had been broken.



COPY

ROSENTHALER ALLIANCE MENNONITE CHURCH,
CHORTITZER, R.M.
TEKATERINO PROVINCE,
RUSSIA, U.S.S.R.

No. 29 December 22, A.D. 1920

CERTIFICATE

AT THE ANNUAL CONVENTION of the Rosenthaler Alliance Mennonite Church, on the First of June, 1920 JACOB J. FUNK was chosen as Evangelist and Deacon on the foundation of the Holy Bible (see Acts 6, 1-6 and Acts 8, 4-5, 40,

AND BEING ORDAINED when the hands were laid on him by the Elders of the Church.

DATED the 19th day of December, A.D. 1920.

sgd. A. Klassen
(Bishop)

(L.S.)
Church
Seal.

sgd. P. Dyck
(Witness)

BAPTIST-MENNONITE
UNION
CHURCH
BLAINE LAKE

A translation of Jacob Funk's ordination certificate from Ukraine. He was ordained as deacon and evangelist, a calling he continued to exercise at the Baptist Mennonite Union Church in Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan.

After the Esaus moved to British Columbia, Pastor Abe Dueck and family came to serve the congregation in July 1959. His services were

conducted only in English. By now, the Russian-speaking people were meeting separately again, except for special events like Thanksgiving.

The church in Blaine Lake, like the two congregations in the rural areas, has gone through several name changes. At first it was the Baptist Mennonite Union Church of Blaine Lake, where the MB and Baptist congregations worshiped together. Then in 1967, to encourage attendance by people of all denominations, the name was changed to Blaine Lake Gospel Chapel, a nondenominational identification.

Jake's heart was always torn between the Russian Baptist/Mennonite Brethren Union and the Mennonite Brethren church in Laird. He found more acceptance among the Russians than among the German MBs across the river, but at a crucial moment the Russians he had accepted as his brothers deserted him. Nationality won out over faith allegiance. All his life he felt burdened to contribute money to the Laird MB Church, but also to the United Church where we children attended and whose members did business in his store. He also contributed liberally to the Russian Baptist/Mennonite church where his heart was. He was church treasurer and sometimes gave guest speakers money from his own pocket as if it were from the church, according to Anna. Only she knew this.

In 1977, a report to the Saskatchewan MB Conference written by an unnamed mission board executive stated: *I am convinced that the field is a difficult one and those people hard to reach with the gospel as is any solid ethnic group. Because of this characteristic I believe the element of failure to grow cannot be laid solely at the feet of the worker per se but must be considered in light of the nature of the field itself.* I find this a prejudiced statement, not acknowledging that the Mennonites are also a solidly ethnic group.

In about 1963, my father wrote me an impassioned letter about how hard it was to reason with the MBs, his blood brothers but not his soul brothers, from across the river. They just didn't understand the Russians and wanted to order them around like inferiors. I think he saw too many resemblances to the way Russians had been treated in Ukraine. Old feelings die slowly. I am convinced he was also recalling the Evangelical Mennonite *Allianz* Church from those days. Cooperation had worked then—why not now?

He and Anna moved from Blaine Lake in 1966. Even in retirement, they kept many faithful friends in Blaine Lake. Johnny O., a former delivery boy, wrote them: "Mr. Funk, you're the best friend I ever had. You know you and your wife are my folks, my MOM AND DAD. I love you so much, both of you."

Paskje

The Ukrainians made paskje using up to 60 or more eggs in one batch, mostly yolks. I can remember huge loaves brought to the Russian church when I was child. Before starting this mammoth enterprise, these women asked God's blessing and help in making this holy bread. This is not a recipe for the faint of heart. The first time I made it I thought it would never rise and was ready to cut the dough into little pieces and add more yeast and water! But I resisted the impulse and it rose—beautifully.

* * * * *

2 packages yeast
1½ cups lukewarm potato water
2 tsp sugar
1½ cups milk
½ cup cream
½ cup butter
6 eggs, separated
2 cups sugar
2 tsp salt
15 drops oil of lemon or 1 tsp grated lemon rind
8–10 cups flour (you were expected to use judgment!)

Dissolve the yeast in the potato water and 2 tsp sugar. Add 2 cups flour and allow to rise.

Scald the milk and cream and when lukewarm, add the butter and 1 cup flour. Beat the egg yolks with 2 cups sugar until thoroughly mixed. Beat the egg whites until stiff.

Combine yeast mixture, milk and cream mixture, and egg yolks. Fold in egg whites. Add enough flour to make a soft dough that can be handled. Let rise in a warm place until double in bulk. Knead gently and fill well-greased and crumbed baking pans about 1/3 full. Traditionally, *paskje* is baked in round tins so that it develops a mound like a mushroom. Let rise.

Bake in a slow oven at 325 degrees for about 45 minutes, depending on the size of the pan. When cool, decorate the tops with butter icing and sprinkles.

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"CANADA AT WAR"

The Depression years ended with the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England in 1937. The Blaine Lake community, a mere dot on the landscape of the British Empire, moved wholeheartedly into the spirit of the rare occasion and staged a mock coronation, with a king and queen in royal robes transported down the parade route on the back of a half-ton truck, undecorated. Queen Marguerite Perrin and her two princesses, Katie Funk (yes, me) and Fern Horner, were royally robed in blue crepe paper dresses worn over snowsuits and feted at an ice carnival featuring a figure skating show at the local rink (see photograph on page 212). A momentous occasion. In 1939, the British Royal couple visited Canada, coming as close as Saskatoon, 60 miles away. All Blaine Lake school children were trucked to the city to watch the royal parade.

The same year, on September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and launched World War II. Great Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later. There had been rumors of war for some time as German fascism reared its ugly head. Because Canada was a British dominion, she also declared war on Germany on September 11. Our teachers announced to their classes that Canada had joined the Allies in war against Germany. We children listened quietly from our straight rows of bolted-down desks. The boys scuffed their new winter school shoes on the oiled wooden floors or played with their pencils. This was something new. The next day, heavy black newspaper headlines thundered the news: "CANADA AT WAR."

The King's calm demeanor in his radio broadcast to the Empire on December 25, 1939, brought courage and comfort to the millions who listened as they faced the dark future. He quoted Minnie Louise Haskins, "And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied: 'Go out

into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.'" No one knew then that the war would last six years.

Conscription didn't begin at once, but young men were encouraged to join the military. Canada needed soldiers to fight in the front lines in Europe with the Allies. Within days of the war announcement, some older boys in high school left for Saskatoon and came back almost immediately, dressed in heavy khaki uniforms, boots, puttees, and little flat caps they tucked into shoulder tabs. They burst into the classroom, eyes bright, step jaunty, to say goodbye and to show off their uniforms before heading for boot camp. For some, it meant goodbye to the daily misery of school and the beginning of a new adventure. Some never returned.

According to the National Registration Regulations of the National Resources Mobilization Act, passed in late spring of that year, every person over 16 was expected to register at the local post office. That act required people to place themselves, their resources, and their services at the disposal of the King. Everyone was expected to carry this registration card on their person for the duration of the war. Jake and Anna were convinced that national registration for their daughters would only mean being placed in some essential industry. Jakie was as yet too young to be involved in the military. War in a good country with a just government would surely be different from what war and revolution had been in an unjust and godless land with a broken government.

Most boys in our small Blaine Lake high school stuck to their studies until graduation, but male teachers resigned one after another to become military officers. One teacher, rejected because he was overweight, grimly stalked the dirt road around the quarter section evening after evening in his personal war against his bulk. One day, he, too, was gone to fight the war and replaced by a woman teacher fresh from the university.

Young men who could afford a university education received military deferment. Those without money were gobbled up by the military unless they were needed on the farm, in an essential industry, or were conscientious objectors to war. In 1940, the government of Canada passed the War Services Act, which stated that all citizens could be called to perform some service to the country. One section stipulated that respect for religious beliefs would be given and made civilian alternative service, in lieu of military training, mandatory for all conscientious objectors. The Doukhobors of the Blaine Lake area and the Mennonites across the river fell into this category. The first group of 22 young

Doukhobor men served four months of alternate service by working on construction of the La Ronge highway 125 miles north of Prince Albert. The bulk of their wages was said to be for the Red Cross. The net intake for the men was fifty to seventy-five cents a day.

Other Doukhobors refused even alternative service. The day these men left Blaine Lake, a main Doukhobor center, for Prince Albert for a court trial to determine their fate, thousands of Doukhobors in traditional dress stood silently at the train station and watched the police escort the young men onto the train. Some had eluded capture for some weeks by hiding in haystacks and bushes. Once again, the Doukhobors saw this as persecution for their faith. They had been promised exemption from military service not many decades before. As the men and police boarded, a wail of anguish, high, keening, in a minor key, arose from the women.

After sentencing, the men were sent to Moosomin penitentiary near Regina, in the southern part of the province. They had refused alternative service because they considered it another form of military service. It violated their promised exemption from military service upon entering Canada in the late 1800s as well as their religious beliefs. The men sent to jail were still eligible for further call-ups. Each man was required to pay a cash amount every month to the Red Cross until the war ended, as were others of military age in Saskatchewan who neither served in alternative service nor had gone to jail.

My brother Jack, a young boy at the time, remembers a British store owner, for whom fighting for one's country was a given, standing near him at the station. The man muttered vehemently, "Those damn Douks, they should be whipped and then shot. Why won't they stand up and fight for this country? Ungrateful sons of bitches!" He eventually saw four sons enlist and only three return. He was probably speaking for many townspeople.

Yet, though these men wouldn't fight, they were standing up for what they believed. They believed so strongly in the sacredness of life that they were vegetarian, refusing to eat anything that required killing. In Russia, the government had attempted enforcement of universal conscription into the army, which forced the Doukhobors into difficult circumstances. They had suffered severely for their beliefs then. It was happening again. About 100 Canadian Doukhobors went to jail as conscientious objectors and a similar number participated in alternative service work.

Mike A., my classmate throughout high school, chose jail instead of alternative service. He spent four months at hard labor in Moosomin

Common Jail. In 1947, he wrote me: "You have no conception what an experience Moosomin Common Jail was mentally, physically, and especially emotionally. In these four months, I must have aged many years." Upon release he faced a new trial, had "dishonorable" noted on his record, and was sentenced to serve another nine months of hard detention behind bars. There, he wrote, he learned to live with himself and to grasp the essence of life. He recognized that "while the mediocre tread the highways, the saints and scoundrels meet in jails."

Thousands gather at the Blaine Lake train station the day the Doukhobor boys from the area were sent off to conscientious objector camp. Some went to prison rather than do alternative service. This was a momentous event for these spiritually-minded people.

The Blaine Lake community adopted a war mentality, with a spirit of patriotism reaching into every area of life. Anna and Jake's attitude toward their adopted country was always positive. They were thankful to be in Canada. For decades they voted for the Liberal party "because Mackenzie King brought us to Canada." Anna also insisted family members go hear Conservative Party Prime Minister R.B. Bennett when he came to our small village, where one of his staunchest supporters lived, Senator R.B. Horner. She was proud and grateful to be a Canadian. Christmas mornings, the whole family listened to the King when he spoke from London. On Armistice Day, Jake and some of us children either attended the service at the local war memorial or in Leask, about 20 miles away, or observed two minutes of silence at home. One owed thanks in all forms. Jake and Anna had known the violence of war, bloodshed, and political upheavals. They were now living in a land of

peace. They were Canadians. But their peace was soon disturbed by the new unrest and antagonism toward anyone with German connections.

On September 7, 1939, a few days after the war declaration by Great Britain, all German-speaking personnel in the OK Economy store chain were informed by their employers at Central Wholesale in Saskatoon that they would be dismissed if they continued their association with any organization, even church, where the German language was used.[27] This order came from A.A. Schellenberg, supported by his brother Jake, sons of the Funk benefactor, Abram Schellenberg. It is not clear whether this order extended to employees in the outlying areas or only to those living in Saskatoon. As a result, First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon lost 47 people, including six single adults and 10 families including 21 children. This large number is a good indication of the many Mennonites the Schellenbergs employed who had worked faithfully for them for decades.

The antagonism toward German-speaking people resulted in many changes, including cancellation of the annual *saengerfest* (song festival) and German classes and sermons in churches. A.A., Jake, and Henry Schellenberg legally changed their last name to Shelly and the name of the family business to Shelly Brothers. Another business decision was to establish a different ethnic identity than German. They informed the public that the family's roots were in Holland, and, just prior to migration to Canada from Russia, their family had owned a Dutch windmill. They were definitely not of German extraction.

According to historian Peter Penner, A.A. Shelly's order to his employees to withdraw from German-speaking congregations was rescinded some weeks later, possibly as a result of Prime Minister Mackenzie King's public statement that most German-Canadians were loyal citizens. After all, about 20,000 Mennonites were able to enter Canada between 1923 and 1929 because he had rescinded an order-in-council barring Mennonites and Hutterites from entering. But the damage had been done.

Anna discontinued her beloved German-language newspapers like *Der Bote, Der Zionsbote*, and *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, the papers that kept Russian-born Mennonites in touch with one another and with anyone still living in Russia. She was glad she could read English. But the loss of these newspapers created a big hole in her life.

Anna and Mrs. Horst liked to visit together because they both knew German better than English. Early in the war, Anna and her friend were

[27] See Esther Paetkau, *The Ministry of J.J. Thiessen in Saskatoon* (M.S.T. Thesis: Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, 1979); and Esther Paetkau, *First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, 1923–1982* (1982).

visiting in a Russian home. The host said, "I wish all Germans would be killed before the war begins." Mrs. Horst and Anna quickly left. Too painful.

The local doctor made it clear that he was a "White" Russian as opposed to a "Red" Russian who had revolted against the Tsarist government. He probably had heard Jake's assertion that the Funks weren't German, and didn't know the winding path by which the German-speaking Mennonites had come to Russia. He insisted we Funks were Germans because we spoke German, just as he was Russian—albeit a White Russian—because he spoke Russian.

The Horsts had a similar background to Jake and Anna's. They had immigrated to Canada from a German Lutheran village near Stavrapol, Russia in 1912. Like the Mennonites, they had come from Europe and settled in Russia under Catharine the Great's earlier Land Grant Scheme of 1764. Canada was their land of golden opportunity. But relationships were getting sticky.

Jake could produce his passport proving he was born in Russia, but nationality was a problem, especially during the war years, because Mennonites enjoyed both a religion and an ethnicity that overlapped. Jake did a little research of his own into Mennonite history and accepted that Mennonites had a Dutch origin. Our name might have been von Funcke. There may have been a lord or baron in our history, he hinted to us children. Anna, on the other hand, insisted we Funks were Canadians. But that did not stop those with watchful eyes and ears waiting for a sign that a traitor lived in their midst.

Once, Jake was standing on the front step of the store as a car drove past. Recognizing someone in the car he lifted his arm to wave. Someone reported him to the police as having given the Nazi straight-arm salute to the people in the car. The RCMP interrogated him but pressed no charges. They knew Jake Funk was a true-blue Canadian, always concerned that his commitments to institutions and values showed. Family, church, widowed mother, community, and even the country that had allowed him to migrate from another ravished by revolution should know which side he was on. To be considered a Nazi was gross insult.

He was at heart a man of peace, possibly better stated as one who found conflict abominable. His well-worn German Bible and preaching notes that have survived him contain no carefully articulated theological statements about peace or conscientious objection to war. He had the habit of wetting his left thumb on his tongue before turning a leaf. Consequently, his Bible has a deep groove nearly an inch wide from constant use. His unarticulated philosophy was peace at all costs—even

when taken advantage of, whether by a customer, relative, or fellow Christian, although he chafed severely under the injustice. "Don't say anything about it" was a frequent rejoinder when one of the children felt some injustice. Why make an enemy when peace was only a few cents away?

Jake wasn't keen on sharing feelings. He didn't know how to let others know his depth of suffering. Instead he told a story, yet sometimes his stories were too painful to bring to birth. All his life Jake hesitated to say much about his years in the Russian Red Cross, hearing the moans and groans of wounded soldiers and watching them die. He had been there because he was a conscientious objector. He was and yet he wasn't. He kept a rifle and shotgun in the attic and also, later, a small handgun in his bedroom. His father had kept a revolver in the mill with him at night to protect himself against marauders. Would he have used it? Would Jake have used a gun? Probably not. So he stood, head bowed, on each November 11, at the cenotaph, not to honor war, but to remember the weakness and suffering of the powerless.

C.C. Stuart, editor of *The Blaine Lake Echo,* also an objector to war, did not fare as well as Jake during the war years. In 1940, the Stuarts, a large British family, moved into a weather-beaten two-story frame box, stark in its ugliness, above the Echo office across the alley from us. The Funk house was always painted and repainted even when it didn't need it. A long wooden staircase in the Stuart's unpainted building led to the second story living quarters, papered in newsprint to keep out the cold.

The Echo made its income primarily from ads. Mr. Stuart insisted Jake place an ad in the paper each week. Jake refused, thinking back to his experience in Bruno, when his competitor lowered his prices as soon as he saw the advertised prices. Jake did business by a different set of rules. Other businessmen also refused to advertise. Mr. Stuart was upset by the lack of support for his business in the community, so finally their children, Sam and Sheila, were sent into the community to solicit ads.

The rumor mill had it that this family with its aristocratic ways had come from a wealthy upper class family in England and for some reason had left the country—or possibly been ousted. They had moved a great deal, and, for some vague reason, were snubbed in the Blaine Lake community. Perhaps it was that the Stuart boys wore British knickers, a strange garment in Blaine Lake, or that the family ate strange food like jam pie.

But the Stuart children enjoyed a freedom of spirit admired by us Funk girls. We girls spent many hours in the company of the children of this family. The Stuarts brought with them a strange mixture of wealth

and poverty—wealth of spirit but poverty of material resources. They introduced a love of beauty into our utilitarian-oriented Funk family. They marveled at the wonders of hoarfrost, took us along on sudden picnics without a whole day of agonizing about what to take along, and listened to classical music, unheard in our home, which was given to Gospel hymns and cowboy songs. They introduced us to Saturday afternoon Metropolitan opera, to walking outdoors for the sheer enjoyment of the offerings of nature.

Their family often sat around the upstairs heater and sang, unheard of in our home, who only sang in the car when the sun was shining and the roads were dry. Once at one of these Stuart singings, Mr. Stuart burst in upon the group and shouted to stop singing "There'll always be an England" in his house. The tiny room became quiet and smaller.

The socialist anti-capitalist views that had possibly gotten Mr. Stuart in trouble in England eventually caught up with him in Blaine Lake during the war years. He spoke his mind boldly and verbally in editorials, inflaming Blaine Lake citizens. One day, the police stood at the door to arrest him for anti-nationalist behavior and to bring him to court. He sent back word to the waiting judge with the police that he was sick and couldn't come. The police took Mr. Stuart to court in his pajamas where he was sentenced to nine months in the penitentiary. While he was gone, Mrs. Stuart asked us to come over one Christmas to spend time with them. Probably no one else would. We had a great time together. We always did.

In nine months, Mr. Stuart came back from jail with dignity, quite rotund and jolly. His crime had been a political gaffe, not a criminal matter. Their family enjoyed a spirit of creativity, dignity of spirit, and uncomplaining attitude despite the odds against them. The whole experience was another of those small town enigmas.

The war years went on with rationing of butter, meat, sugar, shoes, gas, tires, and similar products. Coupon books were issued. Shortages abounded. The people learned to skimp and save and change eating habits. They collected toothpaste tubes and fats. Liver was not rationed, so our family learned to enjoy Anna's crisp liver and onions and her wonderful soups made of non-rationed soup bones. We girls learned patriotic and sentimental songs like *We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when*, and *I'll be seeing you*, and *When the lights go on again all over the world*. The war was fought as much in people's souls as on the front, as they sang these songs. At once hopeful and poignant, they kept dreams alive that the war would be quick, peace would be restored, and the boys in uniform would return home.

Anna joined the Red Cross society, going regularly to the local municipal office to meet with other women to bring home khaki yarn to knit into socks. Anna, a veteran knitter, found her task was re-knitting the feet of socks with shapes so strange the weirdest creature in a sideshow couldn't have worn them. She ripped and re-knitted until they met her expectations of what a turned heel should look like. Yet she never crocheted. While she was working on a *khutor* in Russia her employer had demanded the hired girls crochet doilies for her every night until daylight had faded after they had done their usual heavy work.

Yet all of life was not war. A big step forward in accepting the Canadian culture was the day Anna walked confidently to the hotel to visit a Spirella corsetiere, who came to the community occasionally, to be measured for a corselette. In Russia, women's figures were allowed to expand with the years as the result of many childbirths and a starchy diet. Anna had decided to take a new step.

In the privacy of the hotel room, she was laced into a prototype that pushed and pressured rebellious flesh to find a new resting place, then measured for her own garment. She offered her rationale—her slack muscles needed the extra support such a garment gave after five births. Short, plumpish, conscious of her weight, she liked to look smooth and trim in her Sunday clothes. She spent $15 on a peach-colored corselette, an intricately engineered garment that extended from below the armpits to below the buttocks, laced up the back. The front was a masterpiece, with an inner elasticized belt cinched with straps that hauled the protruding abdomen into place. The outer layer closed with hooks and eyes. The whole was upheld with newly patented stays made of slender strips of coiled wire, flattened. These were guaranteed not to suddenly snap and jab the unsuspecting flesh. Her expenditure didn't nearly begin to match what Jake spent on gadgets that fascinated his curiosity. One spring on our first trip to Laird, over her new undergarment she wore a lovely swagger suit she had tailored in a becoming pale green wool.

During the war years, Anna had three maturing girls as well as herself whose menstrual needs had to be taken care of. A mother's care at the time was shown in her way of looking after this most intimate body process, always secretive. For years during the late 1930s and 1940s, she made sanitary napkins for herself and us girls from worn sheets, lining them with batting and storing them in one of her dresser drawers. As they became soiled, we were instructed to hide them under her mattress. Each laundry day, she picked these rags apart to get rid of the batting, soaked them, bleached them, hung them on the line, and made a new supply. Only after we girls left home did we use store-bought products.

Jake and Anna shielded us children from the facts of life that they had learned growing up with farm animals. Both lacked the language and specific knowledge to comfortably speak about sexual development with us children. We girls grew up unaware of how the turbulent mix of human passions could lead to all kinds of explosive situations. Sexuality existed in a layer too deep below daily life to be discussed. Jake and Anna never publicly embraced, kissed, or spoke words of endearment. The physical aspects of sexuality remained a great mystery and a great shame—to touch one's own body was frowned upon, even if necessary for cleanliness when taking care of involuntary emissions. Yet mothers were expected to be the guardians of morality, taking responsibility for what happened in male/female relationships.

Romantic love reigned during the 1930s and 1940s. Movie stars like Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald rode out into the sunset singing sweet nothings to one another. Young men were leaving behind sweethearts for long years overseas, dreaming of home, family, togetherness and safety away from trench warfare, bombs, rationing, and skimping. During a few springs, high school girls from outlying areas lived in our home for a week while they wrote provincial exams, initiating us into sexuality, if only vaguely.

Anna had been a working woman in Russia from the age of 15 through 25, when she married Jake without her parents' knowledge. They had been lost somewhere in the revolutionary turmoil after World War I. She entered marriage with peace of mind: She had married a good man, with the same outlook on life as her own. She now defined herself as a wife and mother, not as a woman with the work of a wife and mother. There was always the tacit recognition that she and Dad loved one another. Brides in Russia prepared for certain pregnancy with a trousseau that included dresses that expanded at the waist with dome fasteners in the bodice for easier breast-feeding.

Did she expect to bear five children in nine years? I have since wondered whether she ever prayed for barrenness, even while she felt richly blessed in comparison to her sisters who spent 11 years in forced labor in Russia. All her children were healthy, developing well and achieving academically. She told me she always felt good during pregnancy, but the care and feeding of five little children was at times wearisome. I know she sometimes felt embarrassed to bring her large brood visiting to Jake's siblings, none of whom had more than three children, and some only one or none. What did they know that she didn't know? Birth control was as yet a no-no, even though women shared their bits of knowledge.

Anna was always highly protective of us children—morally, physically, and socially. Sometimes we rebelled at her "What will the people think?" mentality, or her reluctance to allow us to fully socialize with children in homes with a fully established "modern" culture. To compensate for her overwork, she made housework a creative enterprise, especially the cooking, baking, and sewing. These became her life. Also her handicrafts. Language remained an obstacle for years. Yet we Funk children were marching full steam into the Canadian culture—with her hitting the brakes or the gas pedal as the occasion warranted.

Grade 11 had been introduced into the Blaine Lake school system about 1929, and Grade 12 with the fall term of 1935, so we children grew up expecting to achieve a high school diploma. In Russia, girls often quit school at the end of grade school, and only the boys went on to *zentralschule*, often to learn a trade. Anna strongly nurtured the idea in us children that we had to have at least a high school education, the lack of which had hampered her all her life, and the means to earn a living.

At no time did Jake and Anna consider sending us girls to Saskatoon to work as domestics, as many families across the river did as soon as a girl finished grade school to help pay the travel debt or support the family. We were living in Canada, where girls were educated just like the boys. Although fees were $10 for Grades 9 and 10, $15 for Grade 11, and $25 for Grade 12, at one time we three older Funk girls were in high school at the same time, a considerable outlay for Jake at the beginning of the school term, a good portion of his monthly wage. All of us girls had four years of French as well as mathematics courses like trigonometry, algebra, and geometry, as well as the sciences.

Jake agreed to high school for us girls, yet couldn't rid himself of the deep-seated conviction that a woman should know how to milk cows, mend socks, and bake bread. What if his girls married farmers? On the other hand, he also openly admired Catherine Green, clerk in the village municipal office, who in his eyes was the epitome of efficiency. In Canada, he could see his daughters doing what she did, and a few other things like teaching or nursing. He was proud of our scholastic achievements, but faced compromises at every turn. He was upset if we were wearing slacks when a minister from across the river showed up. "Get those girls out of their pants" was the strong missive sent home to Anna. But we girls went to high school as a matter of course and did well.

The war years brought many changes to the Blaine Lake community and our home. Over the years, there had been the constant struggle for more space. Four girls in one bedroom. Two girls in each bed. One

comforter for two girls. Boxes of paper dolls, little treasures like broken glass, pencil stubs, all looking for a safe place. Three children to a bench at the table. But that era was ending. Before the 1940s ended, Susie became Susan Frances, Jakie became Jack, Annie became Anne, all more Canadian names. After a brief while being Kay, I stayed with Katie. On completion of high school, after a few months at home, Frieda entered nurses training at St. Paul's School of Nursing in Saskatoon at a time when nurses were the handmaidens of the doctors and provided cheap labor for the hospital.

The end of each month and of the year, when we children brought home report cards, was always a time of rejoicing, for usually we ranked first or second in class. Jake liked to show his monthly store report also, especially if it ranked the Blaine Lake Economy Store at the top of all the stores in sales.

In June 1941, Anne wrote the provincial compulsory exams and did brilliantly, but was not awarded the Governor General's Bronze Medal for excellence because of some irregularity with regard to test examination procedures. With her high school diploma in hand, Anne left for Normal School to learn to be a teacher—in short supply.

I won the Governor General's Bronze Medal for all of Saskatchewan the year I finished Grade 12. This was the first time such an honor had come to a pupil of Blaine Lake High School. Jake and Anna were proud of my achievement. An immigrant's daughter had achieved.

The Blaine Lake Echo carried a glowing account of my short life, all 18 years, noting that in the last year of high school I had had four teachers as one after another left for various reasons. The award was bittersweet, for I planned to attend Saskatoon Technical School, which Jake and Anna saw as a decent achievement for one of their daughters. With Frieda still in nurses training and Anne just finishing Normal School, finances were too tight for anything else. When I told Marjorie Drimmie, the last of my four instructors in literature that year, of my plans to study stenography, she was appalled. She didn't know what it was to have grown up in an immigrant home where knowledge of higher education was limited, even feared. She had grown up in a privileged home, the daughter of the district school superintendent. Lack of money was one obstacle, but a bigger one was probably that Jake and Anna were unfamiliar with the university system. It was too strange to them.

Frieda was still in nurses training the months I was studying at the technical institute, but Anne had moved on to take a position at a rural school near Maymont, where she boarded with an older couple. They went to bed with the chickens. Every piece of furniture was covered with

a doily or afghan. The only light was from kerosene lamps. Anne, who thrived on lots of company and laughter, knew she would wither in this setting and resigned to join the air force as a radio technician, one of 11 women from the Blaine Lake area to enlist, an un-Mennonite thing to do.

The Christmases of the war years were memorable, if only for the journey home by train, around by Prince Albert. It was a long day's commute in a train packed with military personnel and their rucksacks, high spirits, smoke, shouting, and loud music. Dad had written me not to come home, but to stay on the job. Was he concerned about being labeled unpatriotic if we children left jobs to come home for Christmas? I came home anyway, as did the other children.

While in Saskatoon, Frieda, a 1944 graduate of St. Paul School of Nursing, had met Henry Schroeder and the romance bloomed at once. They were married September 15, 1944, in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon.

On August 14, 1945, the words of Japan's surrender to the Allied forces was heard over the airwaves. The war was over. Life could return to normal. After the war, young men like Mike, my Doukhobor classmate who was in jail, and those who had been in the military or in alternative service picked up the current of life where it had been diverted earlier, returning to jobs, to school, to families, sometimes to marriage. The following classmates and friends never came home: Joe Buzik, Donald Gillies, John Coflin, Arthur Bougeault, and Michael Kimber. Those that joined the forces numbered 122, including 11 women, Anne one of them.

After nine years (1932–1940) on the village council, Jake finished his years of public service, the last year as overseer, or mayor. When he had worked on this difficult assignment in the Depression years, the village had been in survival mode. It was time for new leadership with new thinking and new vision as the economy picked up during the war years. Change came in attitudes toward those eligible to lead. The trend to elect only non-Slavic people changed, and the mayor during the next war years was Anthony Kryzanowski. Immigrant children of other cultures were coming into their own.

For decades there had been a stigma against placing people with Slavic names and accents in positions of leadership, like village council, or as teachers, so some changed their names for better opportunity for upward mobility. Alexander Buzovetzky changed his name to Alex Cameron, and in 1973, at the time of his death, was Professor of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. Blaine Lake young people of all nationalities were attending university and other institutions,

getting experience and being acknowledged as leaders. The times were changing.

Jake recognized his time as a leader was over. He didn't have the education to deal with the upcoming generation. He even spent one year on the school board, but working with government regulations, curriculum development, and such matters was beyond him. It was time to pull out and allow younger ones to take over. He wrote me: *I find that when a person gets older, life goes much faster than when a person was young. Yes, I made many mistakes in my life. But you only get experience after you live. But you need experience before you live. And that is why a person makes mistakes. I didn't have experience before. When I look back I ask myself, Why didn't I do it different? Why didn't I? That is a question I can't answer. All I know is that I didn't have the experience to do it different. I had little education. Life is a struggle.*

The next years were both good and difficult as more changes came into Jake and Anna's lives.

Wreninkje

My children remember Grandma Funk for her huge roasters of wreninkje, a food akin to Italian ravioli, eaten with generous spoonfuls of cream gravy on top.

* * * * *

1 pound baker's dry
cottage cheese
½ tsp salt
3 egg yolks

Mix well until cottage cheese is in fine curds. Set aside.

Combine in separate bowl:
3 egg whites, lightly beaten
1 cup milk
2 tsp salt
3 to 3½ cups flour

Mix together, adding flour as necessary until dough is stiff enough to roll out. Turn onto floured board. Roll out half the dough ⅛ inch thick and cut into squares or circles 5 inches in diameter. Place one rounded tablespoon of the cottage cheese mixture on each circle, and fold over to form a half-circle. Pinch edges firmly—very important. Repeat with remaining dough and dough scraps.

In a large saucepan, heat 8–10 cups of water to boiling. Add 1 tsp salt. Drop *wreninkje* into boiling water, several at a time. Stir gently so they don't stick to the bottom of the pan. Cook 5 minutes, or until they rise to the top. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain. Transfer to a casserole dish and brush each layer with melted butter. Serve immediately or bake in a slow oven for about 45 minutes. *Wreninkje* can also be fried in butter until slightly browned.

Cream gravy:
1 stick margarine or butter
2 cups sour cream
1 cup milk or half & half
Salt and pepper

Melt the margarine, add the sour cream and slowly bring to a simmer. Thin with milk or half & half and season.

22

A place that was both a joy and a burden

Changes were taking place in the OK Economy store chain. Abram D. Schellenberg was gradually handing over the controls to his sons and had less say in the business. By 1946, Central Wholesale owned 32 grocery stores and six meat units in central and northern Saskatchewan and supplied groceries to many more. In rural areas, independent grocers and other major firms were moving into the lucrative grocery market brought about by the war, giving Central Wholesale strong competition. Early during the war years, three Schellenberg brothers, Jake's cousins and employers, changed their name to Shelly in a business-oriented move to distance themselves from anything German. A new generation had taken over.

Jake was getting restless in Blaine Lake, so after looking at some stores in Saskatchewan, he and Anna decided to move to British Columbia and invest in a business there. After about two decades with Central Wholesale, Jake was getting tired of making money for someone else. He was not making much headway toward his retirement income. He felt defeated, and wanted to try something else while he still had some vigor. Local villagers may have thought of the OK Economy store in Blaine Lake as Funk's store, but Jake knew it didn't belong to him. He was nothing but a hired manager working for a weekly paycheck.

The extended Funk family, while getting larger, was also separating through marriage and moves to other provinces. Jake's brother-in-law Jacob Janzen had left Saskatchewan in 1932 and was in the retail business in Sardis, British Columbia. In 1939, Jake's oldest brother John headed for Ontario with his family. Henry and family moved to British Columbia in 1940. Peter had always worked independently in Saskatoon as a carpenter. Nick was solidly entrenched at Central Wholesale as a truck driver and Liese just as permanently located in Hague with her husband Abram Friesen, owner of a dry goods store.

Jacob and Anna Funk in 1938. Note Anna's new hand-sewn swagger suit and fancy hat and Jake's spiffy three-piece suit and flat cap.

The Blaine Lake community was also changing. It was no longer the same place Jake and Anna had come to in 1928 as fairly new immigrants, unsure of themselves and their language. The streets saw more cars on the now-graveled roads, and in winter even a few snowmobiles showed up among the cutters and sleighs huddled around the livery barns. Young people were going to university as a matter of course. Businesses on Main Street were changing hands. His next door neighbor, Victor Bourgeault, had sold the hardware store he had operated for decades to William Pawlik. John Koval had expanded his shoemaker shop to include general wares.

The number of friends they visited in Laird was decreasing; over time many of their acquaintances followed the pied piper to either Ontario or British Columbia. In 1941, the entire J.K. Janzen family of

Laird left after auctioning off their few possessions and bought a fruit orchard in the Grimsby area of southern Ontario. Saskatchewan had not been kind to them.

It is hard to know what thoughts went through Jake's mind as he faced the 1940s and the end of the war. One school superintendent had said to Anna, "Move out of Blaine Lake on account of your family." The girls were certain to marry Slavic boys and lose their Mennonite heritage. But the three older girls were already gone from home. After finishing Grade 11, Jack had joined the army, but after spending about six weeks in barracks in Regina, the war with Germany having ended, he was sent home. But he had worn a uniform, if briefly. Susan was still in high school.

In 1945, Jake bravely resigned his position as Blaine Lake OK Economy Store manager, the firm with which he had cast his fortunes since coming to Canada in 1923. He was ready to strike out on his own. Jake drove to Kelowna to check out business opportunities. Others had done it and he could also. It is not clear whether Anna went with him, although she probably did because he needed her to give directions.

Jake spent a few days checking out various business ventures and finally put a deposit of $2,000 on a store he thought had possibilities. But he lacked sufficient accounting skills to judge the true worth of the store and the ability to assess the business potential of the community well. His accounting in Blaine Lake had always been done at Central Wholesale. He only provided the raw data. The next morning, he and the prospective seller planned to sign the final papers, but when Anna woke up in their motel room in Kelowna, Jake was tightlipped and tense. "We're leaving," he said to Anna. He lacked the courage to enter into a full agreement and left without speaking to the owner. They silently packed their suitcases and drove back to Saskatchewan where they faced a future without the Blaine Lake store.

Jake returned from B.C to face the terrifying thought of being unemployed, without an income to support his wife and daughter for the first time in decades. He was a broken man, shaky and distraught. Sue remembers him sitting in the kitchen, shaking and weeping, and Anna almost sitting on top of him to help him gain control. It is unclear what happened, but it is possible the old insecurities ganged up on him in the middle of the night in the B.C. motel room as he thought through his hasty decision. Perhaps he found himself back in Rosenthal, the one always standing on the sidelines when teams were chosen for baseball because he was forced to bat right-handed, making him a dead weight on any team. He didn't have the courage to choose his own team.

In the darkness of the night he forgot that once he had managed the supplies for a large army kitchen, or that in Blaine Lake he had helped guide the struggling village through the difficult years while an active member of the village council for nine years. Probably he saw only his lack of education, his imperfect language skills, his social ineptitudes, his immigrant status, and that he knew no one in this new community he planned to join. In 1962, he wrote me: *I will never let go again of what we have before I have something sure, better. I made that mistake once. It was a lesson to me that I will never forget. Faraway fields look green, but when I got there they were not so hot.*

Blaine Lake was finished with them. The green fields of British Columbia were clearly not the place for them. Anna took over. They decided to move to Saskatoon, for the house had been sold and his job at OK Economy was finished. They bought a large three-story house and Jake accepted a job as furniture mover for Hudson Bay Store, hard work for a man in his fifties, even though he had been used to hard work. Sue finished Grade 10 at Bedford Road Collegiate that spring.

Anna took in two boarders and one man who ate only the evening meal, but she fed them too well—never made much money. But the family held together. Anne, Sue and Jack lived at home, Anne paying board and room while attending university. Anna offered Jack free room and board if he returned to school to finish his school diploma. She was concerned he was entering adult life with a handicap if he didn't have at least a high school diploma. He worked part-time at Joe Green's butcher shop for spending money. Frieda was working as a nurse. I had resigned my position as a legal stenographer and planned to attend Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. When I left for Winnipeg that fall, Mother cried bitterly on my shoulder and I didn't know what to do. Life was hard.

When military personnel returned to their jobs, Jake was fired at Hudson Bay and went into a serious clinical depression, isolating himself from the family. He should have had professional help but didn't. In those days, depression was a spiritual, not a medical issue, solved by prayer and fortitude. Anna had never bothered much with doctors and medicine. She had never been in a hospital or taken any pills or medicine except two aspirins once for a headache. The Funk medicine cabinet was a bare bones affair—aspirin, Vaseline, mustard salve, and possibly one or two other over-the-counter medications. We girls were never allowed to linger in bed with menstrual cramps. Pain was part of life.

Jake saw himself as a failure, but didn't have the resources to pull himself out of his dark hole and probably wouldn't have known where

to go for help, except to the pastor, new to them. I remember coming home from Winnipeg at Christmas to see him huddled in a dark corner, hunched over, unable to acknowledge my presence

By winter, Shelly Brothers realized that their store in Blaine Lake was losing ground fast without Jake at the helm with his great rapport with the Slavic people. He had been the heart and soul of that store in that Russian community. Their district superintendent, a sympathetic man, came to the house on 28th Street to offer him the opportunity to buy the Blaine Lake store. The terms of the agreement are unknown. Jake jumped at the chance to own the store in which he had invested much of his life. He purchased the store under the Shop-Rite banner. New name, new beginnings, but same manager.

Jake returned first to Blaine Lake in early spring to find and buy a house. Anna, Jack, and Anne came when the school term was finished to clean and paint the former Crowe house, standing across the street from their former house with almost the same layout. Someone had told Jake that the previous owner had used the kitchen sink as a urinal (right height for an old man who didn't like to go out on cold winter nights), so it was the first item thrown out. They scrubbed, scraped, stripped, and painted that house, so that it didn't resemble its former rundown condition.

Anna had vowed never to return to Blaine Lake and now they were back there again. But she had faced difficult situations before. This new mountain was not insurmountable. She wrestled the matter out before God. Whatever made Jake happy would make her happy. Later she admitted they had some of their best years in Blaine Lake this second time. Jake had made his peace with Blaine Lake and that meant Anna was at peace. Anna admitted later. "I was glad to be back." This was their place. This was home. The German word *Gelassenheit*, or yieldedness, describes her attitude. She would never live among her own people. Jake's people, the Russians, were her people.

My father wrote me: "I live among the Russians. I am a Russian among the Russians. To win the Russians I have to live like a Russian." His soul was Russian, not German-Mennonite. He plunged into rebuilding the store with zest, for now it was his store as well as his people.

The brief time in Saskatoon had shown Anna what life was like in the city and tempered her attitude about wanting to live elsewhere. When they had left Blaine Lake about a year earlier, Anna had told Jake a pair of oxen couldn't drag her back, she was so unhappy. All the earlier years in Blaine Lake she had belonged nowhere—neither with the "English"

people nor with the Russians. Now that they were back, she decided to throw her lot in with the Russians.

Anna found courage to move out into the community. Although she attended the United Church Ladies Aid and the Red Cross, both English organizations, her closest friends were Russians: Mrs. John Wasilenko, Helen Kulik, as well as the few Mennonites now living there. Anna became the first president of newly organized Ladies Missionary Prayer Group.

The entire family was home for Christmas 1946, including my and Anne's boyfriends, Walter Wiebe from Yarrow, B.C., and Wes Kruger from Saskatoon. Henry and Frieda Schroeder stayed at the local hotel. The small house was more than full. Jack had taken an abbreviated course at Normal School that fall and been abruptly shoved into a teaching position in a rural school. For a few joyous days, the heavy darkness of the previous year was forgotten as the family ate and laughed together.

In earlier years, when the children were small, Anna seldom went to the store—that was Jake's domain. She had enough to do at home. If she needed something, she sent a child. After she had washed the noon dishes and the children returned to school, "I had my time to be with the Lord." She didn't visit much with other women, so she had lots of time for prayer. That now changed. She realized she could help Jake by keeping the store clean and taking care of produce, and thus save money. Each afternoon she went to the store to do "her work." Anna, immigrant mother, had become a modern working woman.

The community in the post-war years was not as heavily overlaid with foreign accents from Irish to Polish this time around. Their neighbors on one side were a very large family. The house resembled a rabbit warren with little barefoot children popping out the front door even in the dead of winter in the snow to run around and enter through the back. Clothes were worn and then tossed into a corner, rarely washed. The pile got bigger and bigger. Laundry day never arrived. Children, house, and wife were dirty, but laughter and talk was abundant. The previous owner had built a high fence to keep the sight and sound of them out. Jake tore it down. Old friends asked Anna, "What are you going to do with your neighbors?" Anna replied, "Love them." And love them she did. Mr. K., an invalid for many years, told Anna he liked to hear Sue practice hymns through the thin walls of our houses. What a small gift to give a sick man.

Anna meant what she said about loving her neighbors. This time around it would be different. She deliberately befriended young married

women and taught them housekeeping. She had few money-making skills, but she could offer what she knew best—how to manage a home and cook. One such woman was the wife of a man who worked for a local farmer. He had once tried to commit suicide by shooting himself in the forehead, but survived, leaving a deep indentation in the middle of his brow. His wife had been a nurse and was discouraged about her husband's mental health. Anna taught the woman housekeeping skills like childcare and cooking and gave her curtains to make her house more attractive.

She befriended Olga, wife of a man who drank heavily. He came to the store often to buy aspirins, swallowing five or six at a time to ease his hangovers. Jake, much concerned about the man's drinking, talked to him about it and his spiritual life. They went into the little back room of the store and the man committed his life to Christ. Shortly thereafter, he had a heart attack and died—even though he had been joking with friends in the afternoon. Anna was called to a house full of relatives, with the body still lying on the couch. Anna said gently to Olga, "You have Christ. Lean on him." In times of stress Anna had found comfort in her faith. She was firmly convinced her prayers had kept her girls from harm when in the city. She encouraged others to look to the same source.

Jake had been aware of the alcoholism in the Blaine Lake community from his first years there. The town had several beer parlors and in earlier years, bootleg whiskey was popular. In the 1930s, husbands and fathers would bring Jake their paychecks early Saturday night to keep them safe lest they drink and gamble away the week's hard-earned money and food for their family. At the end of the long evening of joyous carousing they would come to retrieve the check once the liquor stores and halls had closed, with a heartfelt, albeit slurred, thanks. At the time, Jake hadn't known what to do about the alcoholism. In Russia, sometimes offenders were publically whipped and told to stop drinking. They may have been disciplined in a church meeting and shamed. Preaching against drunkenness and hard liquor had been part of the Mennonite Brethren reform movement in Russia.

Jake was becoming increasingly burdened with the alcoholism in the village, especially with the younger men, some still in high school. Somewhere Jake heard of the AA program and that alcoholism was a disease, not a moral lapse. The men couldn't restrain themselves unless they avoided even the least taste of alcohol. Jake decreed no alcohol in the house, not even in fruit cake, often soaked in rum. He subscribed to AA publications and joined the local group in order to understand and help the men enslaved to it. One day, a former Blaine Lake man now

living in Prince Albert and involved with AA came to Jake to find out who the J. Funk was on the AA list in Blaine Lake. The Jake Funk he had known growing up in Blaine Lake was a teetotaler. Was there another one? Jake admitted his membership and reasons for it. He continued his efforts to help the men of the community in their struggle to overcome the battle against alcohol.

A few years later, in fall 1947, Jake came to George Stocks, postmaster, suggesting a Memorial Day service be held in Blaine Lake. Together, the two men organized the annual service for the next 15 years. The younger man was a recent World War II veteran, the older one a World War I veteran. Each service in front of that short obelisk included two minutes of silence in the cold winter air. What prompted Jake to want this service in his home community? Was it a patriotic gesture to remember the many Blaine Lake military men who had died in the wars or something deeper?

Humor returned to him. We children laughed at his report of an accident in the store, which could have been tragic. A Doukhobor woman fell down the open basement stairs, a hazard to the uninitiated. A sign at the stairs reading "Private: Cellar" didn't help. Customers liked to go into this little back room leading to the cellar to discuss private matters. In the heat of the discussion one woman backed into the open stairwell and slid to the bottom.

There she was—200 pounds of flesh, head down, long skirts over her head, feet in all directions. I headed down the stairs and placed the skirts where they belonged to cover up what should be covered, and turned her over on her face. I couldn't lift her, although I tried hard. She was too heavy. She got up on her four God-given hands and feet and sat on a box. The other woman, a widow, came down and they kept on talking their secrets—and figured out how to get a man with money hooked to the widow. I hope God will be merciful to him. Jake wanted to know his responsibility in the matter. Seriously?

Even as Jake and Anna considered themselves rooted for the time being, the children were moving away. Before Henry and Frieda Schroeder's marriage in 1944, Henry served in the army for one year and the Air Force for four years. He then moved into sales with C.A. DeFehr's import business, finally ending up in Edmonton.

Anne and Wesley L. Kruger were married in Saskatoon in 1947. Anne had been in the RCAF for two-and-a-half years, all in Canada, Wes in the army. Both were attending the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon when they met and moved into teaching.

I, next in line, attended MBBC for two years before marrying Walter Wiebe, a Bible teacher with a keen interest in religious journalism. For

eight years we lived in the Hepburn area, where Walter worked first as a rural school teacher, then four years at Bethany Bible Institute, and lastly as pastor of the Hepburn MB Church before moving to Ontario. Jake and Anna loved coming to Hepburn on his day off for the evening meal and a visit.

Jack married Joyce Miner in 1952; both were involved in the teaching profession. In 1972, Jack was appointed as director of Core Services for the Province of Saskatchewan, followed by a number of years living in North Battleford working with Indian Affairs.

Susan (Sue) and Harold Kruger were married in 1953 in Saskatoon after Susan completed her nursing degree. They spent the next years in Belgium learning French and several terms as missionaries in the Congo before returning to the United States to work as educators.

All five of us children attained at least one or two degrees, a big step away from our immigrant background. All but Frieda moved into educational pursuits at the high school or college level.

The Funk home in Blaine Lake soon filled with children and grandchildren always welcomed. We usually returned home with a box of dented cans and a little money pressed into the hand by Jake on leaving. He and Anna desperately needed these visits and he was always willing to pay the gas for our trip.

Letters from Anna's remaining siblings in exile in forced labor in the Kazakhstan area started again in 1953 with the death of Stalin, the much-feared and hated dictator for several decades. They dragged Jake and Anna back into their past as they read letters about hardship, deaths, struggles, and hopes, as well as regrets at not having emigrated in the 1920s. Her parents, Franz J. and Katharina Janzen, had died in 1931 and 1928, yet most of Anna's sisters had survived. Her brother Johann died in 1950, Franz in 1942, Kornelius in 1943, the latter two in the Gulag. Of the 12 children, only she and brother Jake Janzen immigrated to Canada.[28]

Jake's mother, Susanna Funk, died of a stroke in Hague in 1955, still living in the long, unpainted house with the hollyhocks in front. Her insurance against marauders was a large butcher knife stuck in the door jamb to prevent it being opened. When she didn't respond to her daughter's knocks one morning, some men forced the door open to find

[28] For the story of what happened to Anna's family, those that remained in Ukraine to suffer through Stalin's Great Terror, see my annotated collection of Aganeta's letters written to her sister Anna and her brother Jacob living in Canada (Katie Funk Wiebe, *A Strong Frailty: The Life of Aganeta Janzen Block, 1906–2000* [Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Hillsboro, 2014]).

her helpless on her bed from a stroke. She spent the last weeks of her life in a nursing home in Rosthern. She had experienced war, revolution, flight, hunger, sorrow, typhus, widowhood, and much more in Russia. She had dared to come to Canada with three young boys not knowing how she would support herself, and had managed, never wealthy, never in extreme need, but always happy. Now she was gone.

Big changes were coming to Blaine Lake to bring it into the modern era. In 1957, ambulance service started. No longer would the residents have to depend on Dr. Batanoff's high-axle vehicle to transport patients to the hospital. The business spread to hospital transfers and servicing neighboring towns.

The shift from ferry service across the North Saskatchewan River to a modern bridge brought the communities across the river closer, taking business from Blaine Lake, but also bringing people to it. In 1921, the Petrofka Ferry carried 1,073 double vehicles, 537 single vehicles, 31 saddle horses, 886 loose animals, 12,669 passengers, 4,067 autos, and one engine. By 1956, travelers reported having to wait up to 2½ hours to cross. That year, from April 26 to August 26, 682 cars, 8,246 trucks, 143 tractors, 58 units of machinery, and 91,161 passengers were ferried across. This did not count night traffic. A traffic bridge was sorely needed. The long winter that isolated the community on the northern side of the river was wearying. The governing group decided to build a bridge at Petrofka crossing, which opened on September 16, 1962, with about 1,800 people in attendance.

Soon thereafter, the rural schools of Brook Hill, Greystone, Petrofka, and Windsor Lake were closed and their pupils transported to the Blaine Lake school. Because this would bring the number at this centralized location to more than it could handle, plans were made to build a new six-room high school. As more rural schools closed, space again became a problem. Of the 356 students enrolled in 1961, 240 were from outside the Blaine Lake School District. The two-story brick building that all the Funk children attended for years was demolished in 1972. Gone were the oiled floors which made footwear with rubber soles curl up, as well as the many other little details that defined the school in the 1930s and 1940s. High school graduates were going on in large numbers to get advanced degrees in many fields besides education, such as medicine, law, political science, and agriculture. The immigrant reluctance to move into higher education was gone with the second and third generations.

Another new addition was the public library and the telephone service's switch to automatic in 1965. No more manually dialing of calls

by a central operator. No longer would people race to the phone to hear what was being said on the "General Call" that announced auction sales, public meetings, dances, sporting activities, or some disaster such as a fire.

Further evidence of Canadianization. Jake and Anna in front of Funk's Shop-Rite in the early 1960s. Note Anna is wearing a store apron and helping in the store, an unheard-of role for a married woman in Russia.

A change that affected Jake and Anna and all the other residents greatly was connecting all village homes to a central water system. The plumbers began in the Funk home in July 1961, digging deep trenches to keep lines from freezing in the cold winters. Anna found the noise from the many machines hard to bear, but welcomed what they were bringing. The new bathroom was built onto the remodeled kitchen. Anna wrote me in spring of 1962: *Now when you come, you can all have a bath. It is good*

water. I look around and ask myself, is this my kitchen? Our pipes never froze once during the worst frost, although they did freeze in some places. A bathroom meant people didn't have to wash at the kitchen sink while she was preparing meals. No more carrying water from the well to drink. No more filling the cistern each fall. No more melting snow.

With the children all gone, Jake saw himself as a conduit through which all news flowed to and from the children. Often they were only notes. He had great concern for each family member, and for holding them together. Anna let him do most of the letter-writing, for it gave him something to do.

After the disastrous trip to B.C., Jake was ever more reluctant to venture into the unknown. In 1963, I was living in Hillsboro, Kansas, now recently widowed with four young children. Anna wanted to visit us, but Jake had grave misgivings about such a long trip. Finally, they came, by bus, with the intent to stay a week, but after checking over the house I had purchased, putting up a basketball hoop for James, and finishing a few other minor repairs, Jake declared it was time to go home. Their time was over before the week was over. He was satisfied I would make it.

A deep bonding took place between Jake and Anna that would last 66 years. During the Depression years, they had faced the challenges of the new land—new weather patterns, new language, new currency, different nationalities on all sides, changing culture. Her attitude was that Jake carried the burden of supporting the family. Hers was to support him. Therefore, he deserved a good meal, rest, and no commotion when he came home. All their married life, she laid out his clothes for him in the morning. She told him when to bathe. He was never expected to help with making meals or cleaning up. Men achieved, women supported. His was the public sphere, hers the private. She became the peacemaker between him and us when we complained to her about his resistance to our wants. She knew the pressure on him to make a living, and also our desire to have more things.

"Place is character. Place is something that shapes you and your understanding of yourself," writes Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe. For the first 25 years of Dad's life, the isolated village of Rosenthal in Ukraine had shaped him, and its culture followed him to Canada. He thought he had scraped the mud of its streets from his shoes, only to find that some of it had clung anyway. He was fighting some of the same struggles, hurts, enemies, and frustrations here in Canada as in Russia. He was caught betwixt and between. He had personally known rejection as a boy, so when he saw a child rejected by classmates or an adult cast aside by

society, he knew the feeling. He had learned the language of the poor and the underdog.

Although he had early in life enjoyed preaching the gospel of salvation, he found it difficult to talk about his soul's aches while being sustained by the belief that the power of evil could and must be overcome by a greater power—God's grace. He maintained loyalty to God, even as he became a silent dissenter of compromised forms of Christianity. He picked up inconsistencies with the ability of radar.

For 45 years, the small village of Blaine Lake in northern Saskatchewan had added to his understanding of himself. In 1966, he sold Funk's Shop-Rite store and was ready for a different environment. He was tired, he said. It was time to rest. It was time to leave this place that had been both a joy and a burden. He was 70 years of age. He made few plans for what lay ahead, using as his model for retirement the relaxed inactivity of older neighbors in Rosenthal. He did not expect to rest for the next 21 years.

Vinatarta

Mother first made vinatarta in the 1940s for each of our weddings. She had become comfortable with measuring cups and exact amounts and new foods. Since our weddings were held in Saskatoon, this cake traveled well and could be made several weeks ahead of time.

* * * * *

1 cup butter
1 cup sugar
2 eggs beaten
1 tsp vanilla
3–4 cups flour
3 tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
1/3 cup milk
½ tsp almond extract
1 tsp lemon rind

Mix as for cookies to make a soft dough. Set aside to rest. Divide dough into six equal parts. Roll out to fit 8–9 inch cake pans lined with wax paper. Bake at 350 degree for 20–25 minutes until light golden. Cool slightly, turn out, and remove wax paper. Spread each layer with prune filling. Press lightly together and store in an airtight container for 2–3 days to ensure moist cake. Spread with cream cheese icing and decorate with blanched almonds formed as daisies. Slice very thin.

Filling: Cook 2 pounds prunes in 2 cups water slowly, until prunes are very soft. Cool. Mash prunes with a fork or in food processor and add 2 cups sugar, 1 tsp vanilla, ½ tsp salt, ½ tsp cardamom, 2 tablespoons lemon juice. Cook slowly until thick.

23

A necessary migration of a different kind

The move to British Columbia, the destination of many older Mennonites, was uneventful. They sold their possessions, keeping a few treasured items, and moved to Clearbrook with the help of Anne and Wes and Henry and Frieda. Here, in the house on Fir Avenue, life took on different rhythms for Jake and Anna than it had in Blaine Lake. No store to open early in the morning for the first customers wanting milk for breakfast or bologna for sandwiches. No front sidewalk to sweep clean of sunflower seeds. No furnace to stoke. No grocery order to prepare for the truck driver. While Anna continued the housekeeping activities she had been engaged in all their married life, Jake now faced filling more than two thousand discretionary hours each year, a huge challenge. Previously how he spent his time had been dictated by work and by customers, both the buying and non-buying kind. Now he had to order his own world.

He wrote me: *What we never possessed we don't miss, but to cut off a 45-year routine of work is hard to take. Not working is harder than working. When not working, the day is too long.*

He recognized that British Columbia with its pleasant temperatures was a "Mecca for Mennonite old folks. Old people flock here like birds in the fall that go elsewhere for the winter." Jake saw himself as one of the younger ones, although he was seventy at the time of their move from Saskatchewan.

His first task was to become acquainted with the neighborhood, so he walked and walked, up one street and down another. He clipped a saying and pasted it to a card: *Street people are feet people. They're neat people who meet people. Why not join up? Take a walk.* He added the comment when he sent it to me: "That's me." He walked to keep his body limber. *If I don't work I get stiff. I have to be active to feel good and live. When I work, the time*

goes quick. But when I don't work, I get bored. I enjoy working. But he had no work.

In later years, he used a cane, but walking brought him out of the house and, sometimes, in contact with people—what he missed most in this new life. Once, he stood at the corner with his cane, wearing dark glasses, deciding which way to go for his morning walk. He asked a young man if it was safe to cross the street. The young man said he would help him. Too embarrassed to say he could see, he let the young man help across the busy thoroughfare.

His essential aloneness brought him together with other lonely people. His letters to me were filled with mention of lonely people: *You wrote that you helped an old lonely woman. Old people are lonely. We know. Our old friends are mostly gone. We would like to talk about the old times in Russia. We don't go out much alone. I am glad that Mom is with me. I would be very lonely. Don't worry. We take it day by day. I met a man who was blind, totally blind. I felt better. I can see yet.* In Blaine Lake, his loss of friends had been assuaged by his close encounters with men and women, children and young people, Russian, English, French, Ukrainian—whatever. He felt a bond with them.

We will visit an old man who can't walk—very lonesome. That is life in the silver age. They say a man is only as old as he feels, but how old does he feel? It depends on how his health and mind is. Jake Enns visited us yesterday. You may remember him. He still talks so much. I just listen, don't have to talk. He is nice company. I wish he didn't live so far away. He mentioned an old man who waited at his window every morning for him to wave at as he walked past.

In another letter he wrote: *I met an old man by the lake on my walk. He lay there as if he was sleeping. I sat down and let him sleep. Then he opened his eyes and asked if I had been sitting there a long time. I said I was waiting for him to come back to tell me about his trip. Was he sleeping?*

"No," he said, "I was daydreaming." He said his dead wife came to visit him in his daydreams.

"Are you lonesome?" I asked him.

"No, by God, no, I have a good time," he said. "I visit with my wife many times. She passed away over 10 years ago."

I asked him how the trip to visit her was. Where did he go? Did he make such a trip every day or oftener? He said yes.

Jake commented: *All that old people have in this world is the past to live over in their mind. In daydreams or in the spirit, your mind can travel faster than a plane. You can go into the past. You can go to any country. You can see your children.*

You may think it is crazy or evil. No, it is company for old people to pass and enjoy the time.

When you put yourself into the subconscious, the past becomes real. In my daydreams I place myself in your house, Katie. I see you working on your plane, James. Your Mom is sitting and correcting papers or writing. Sometimes it is so real I hear you talk, James. The wings of your model plane will not stand up under the pressure, I believe—need more enforcement. If it doesn't fly, let it fly in your dreams. In my daydreams I fly to Russia. I have a good time there.

Jake longed for that past when he had been young and vibrant, ready to face each day with courage and energy. He reminisced about Blaine Lake. *We miss the old Russian friends sometimes. Our old store stands yet. Kulyk's garage is gone, an empty place. Our old houses still stand. Many old times are gone. Soon we'll be gone, too. Yes, young people are getting older, and we'll soon be gone. In Russian, we have a poem: "Sie sind nicht mehr, sie sind nicht mehr"* [They are no longer with us.] *All that is left is memories.* Sometimes memories were not enough.

At issue was which of the dozen or more Mennonite Brethren churches to join in the Clearbrook/Abbotsford area. A Russian church was out of the question. A large Mennonite Brethren church was located a few blocks away, but Jake and Anna finally decided to join the King Road Mennonite Brethren Church a few miles away, a German-language congregation with mostly new immigrants from Germany and Russia. Here Jake felt more at home in this simpler, less formal congregation. People were more at his level socially and educationally, and they understood his background. He was happy to take widows along whenever necessary, picking them up and bringing them home. Anna plunged in, becoming the church librarian and even VBS director. When the women decided to publish a cookbook, Anna went to businesses to solicit ads, Jake driving, of course. She had never learned to drive and it gave him something to do.

He coaxed the swallows his neighbor had chased away from his carport, not wanting the mess, into his own by building a little ledge in a corner for them to build a nest on. They were looking for a home. Now Anna muttered about the mess, but the birds returned, year after year. He spent many an hour sitting in the sunshine in the carport, watching them dart in and out.

In the early years, Anna loved to visit and have visitors. She was finally living among her own people, so to humor her Jake took her visiting former friends from the prairies. Some guests, like Jake's brother Henry who lived in Vancouver, visited. They sat up until 11 p.m. talking about their former home in Rosenthal. He wrote: *Many others are old, old,*

old. It is good medicine to go there [nursing home]. *I feel sorry to see some suffer so much. We are glad that we can manage alone.*

He reminisced: *Yes, the birds leave the nest one by one. Not many years yet and your children will leave the nest, one by one. First you set the table for one or two people, then for three, and then for four, five or six. Then for one less, next for two less. And it comes the time you'll set the table for one only—yourself. When they are young you think, when will they grow up? Enjoy them while you still have them. We miss you. Getting old is a lonesome life, but don't feel sorry for us. We are better off than many. We can travel and go fishing, even if I don't get any.*

He enjoyed going into grocery stores or supermarkets to see what was for sale. He carried home groceries Anna needed and didn't need. He didn't feel at ease with himself if he walked into a store and didn't buy something, sometimes small items on sale he thought a grandchild or child might enjoy—hand-embroidered dresser scarves from Israel, colorful muumuus from Hawaii, or halvah, the mid-Eastern delicacy of our childhood. He knew how he had felt when customers walked in, checked the shelves, and walked out.

In his explorations, Jake sometimes took a bus to a random destination for something to do. One day he traveled to Hope, about 50 miles away, and enjoyed the ride, looking at the new scenery. However, trans-Canada Continental buses didn't pick up passengers just any place like local transit buses, so he missed the bus back to Clearbrook because he didn't get to the depot in time. He phoned collect to Anna to explain his quandary. "Do you have enough money for a hotel room tonight?" "Yes." "Have a good time!" she said and hung up. The next morning he returned sheepishly from his adventures.

Together he and Anna traveled to Kelowna by bus, with a tour group. True to his nature, Jake wandered off to investigate his own interests. As he stood on the street corner, in his ill-fitting coat, a Red Cross worker approached him to say they were serving coffee at the mission around the corner for old age pensioners. He was always cold, never ready to shed his long johns, even in summer. On a trip with Henry and Frieda Schroeder, everyone was complaining about the unusual heat, including Jake, only to learn he was still in his winter underwear.

Mail was a lifeline to children and the world. He and Anna were disturbed when the postal workers went on strike, sometimes for six weeks at a time. "We are so glad that the mail is going again. Katie, you are the best letter writer." I wrote every week.

He continued to taxi other people to church or shopping until he had a near-accident and became aware of his own limitations. For some reason, he drove over the median into the other lane. Another driver

stopped and drove Jake's car home. Because he feared hitting a pedestrian, he turned in his license to the Motor Vehicle Division: *I am returning my driver's license voluntarily. I can't drive anymore because my eyes are bad. It is hard to give up driving after driving the car over 54 years since 1923. I started to drive with a Model T Ford car. I had nine cars—bought four new cars—have no record of the mileage I made.*

Never had an accident. Never got a ticket from the police for any cause. Never got points off for bad driving or mistakes. The insurance company never paid out money for me. I want to thank you for giving me the privilege to drive. Now I'll use the taxi or bus to be safe and let other people drive. I am over 81 years. The people in B.C. are good to old people. Your record of my driving will prove my clean record.

Henry and Frieda drove the yellow Ford to Edmonton, "at 50 miles per hour only," Jake's last instructions as they took off.

His plans to use a taxi or bus or ask other people for rides became a huge barrier. Grocery shopping using a taxi had no stigma but his fiercely independent spirit kept him from asking neighbors for rides. For a time Jake and Anna used a taxi to get to church, accepting a ride home. He had a reluctance to owe anyone anything even though he had spent a lifetime giving. Frieda mentioned that it took him a week to ask a relative to take him to Chilliwack to catch a bus. But this reluctance to ask for help meant more time at home by themselves.

He sent me a newspaper clipping: *What we do in our lives today, what we do to discover and develop our latent talents and abilities, now when we do not have to, this will determine what and where we will be when the day shall come that we can no longer help it.* Jake's marginal comment: "If I could live again, I would prepare myself more than I did. Too late now." That feeling that it was too late slowly grew on him. He had never grasped the idea that growth of the spirit could continue when the body ceased to function as well as it had in early years.

He wrote: *It is nice to remember the good things about the past, but different to have lived it! It is not so good to remember the bad. We get experience after we have lived it and made mistakes we can't change. But we get wise because of the mistakes but not rich. Yes, I made many mistakes I am sorry for, but I can't live my life over again. What would I do differently? Life is a struggle. It is hard to swallow that I can't do what I wish to do. It is nice to remember the good only. I wish very much to forget the bad. But can't. It is good to read to the children what we as parents remember about our lives. But will they understand??? I don't think so.*

In thinking about the Blaine Lake days, he never harbored malice toward the many people who had never paid their store debts. He never considered sending out bills or suing a debtor. When he left the prairies, he wrote off numerous bad debts, never keeping track of the total sum.

One morning, in British Columbia, a former customer knocked on the door and asked to speak to Jake privately. Mother and I retired to the bedroom. After about 15 minutes the man left. He had brought Jake $200—a considerable sum. Jake didn't want to accept it, but the unpaid debt had been bothering his conscience, the man said. He wanted to make good his debt. After the man left, Jake turned to us with a puzzled look on his face and the words: "He didn't owe me a thing." What others owed him had long ago been forgiven and forgotten. What his own failures and shortcomings might be always hovered near the surface.

We children racked our brains to find something for him to do and visited when we could. He did not read and television was boring, yet sometimes Anna read books we sent to him. He painted by numbers and with textile tubes, but never moved beyond what was prescribed by the manufacturer's prescribed design. He churned out pillowcase after pillowcase, tablecloths, tea towels as fast as Anna could buy cloth and stamp them.

In 1977, Anna fell in the carport on the hard cement floor. Fortunately, an X-ray showed nothing broken and the doctor recommended bed rest. Anna's fall gave Jake the "shock treatment" he needed, according to Frieda, who with Anne visited B.C. most often. This accident put Jake in charge of the household, with Anna telling him what to do. He showed he was quite capable of looking after himself and Anna as well. *People are very good to us. We manage well. She is much better. She can walk now, using both legs. We make dinner together, clean up together. Too bad it happened. Now we'll stay home on Sunday. We use the taxi to church or store; people visit us. We are very hopeful and living again.* For a time he had a reason to live: Anna needed him.

Anna's response to her accident was "It was a miracle…the best thing that could have happened!" She saw it as restoring Jake's confidence in himself. They got a lot of attention from people they had helped, as well as church members. As Anna improved, he helped with small household chores in the kitchen, like clearing the table or drying dishes, a new role for someone who had stayed out of the kitchen throughout wedded life. The children exchanged hasty letters discussing what to do with "Mom and Dad." It was decided that for the time being it was best they stay in Clearbrook.

A major event occurred in 1978 when Anna's sister Gertrude (Truda) Janzen Koop arrived from Germany for a several-month visit in Canada. Anna and this much younger sister had not seen each other since 1923 shortly before Jake and Anna and girls had left for Canada—almost a lifetime. Anna and Truda's parents and other siblings had still been in

desperate need in the Sagradowka area when Jake and Anna left, but their father, Franz Janzen, wasn't interested in migrating. He didn't see Canada as a better place to live. He lived to regret it, as did his family.

Two of Anna's sisters, Gertrude (Truda) Janzen Koop (left) and Marichen Janzen Froese. Truda visited Canada in 1978. Photograph taken in Germany (1990), where they and many other German-speaking Mennonites from the Soviet Union managed to immigrate as repatriated citizens of Germany (Umsiedler) during the 1970s and 1980s.

It was impossible not to see the family resemblance between Anna and Truda, a slightly younger and heavier version of Anna. At first she had told herself she would just "look in" at Jake and Anna's place, for she was unfamiliar with this much older sister. She had only been twelve at the time of their leaving, and Anna had already been gone from home for some time working to help support the large family, twelve children in all. But in the end she found herself enjoying renewing acquaintances with this older sister. Truda was a warm, loving person, and very positive despite having endured difficult years in forced labor in Siberia. She spoke freely about her experiences and her remaining siblings in Siberia.

Without enough responsibilities, Jake worried. In 1979, he had been fretting for a while about the roofing job a company had done on the house. When Frieda and Henry arrived from Alberta, Jake had Henry up on the roof even before they had unloaded the car. Henry spent several hours on the roof with tar and nails but when he offered to complain to the company, Jake became agitated. Anna told Frieda his intense anxiety about insignificant matters had become more frequent in the last months.

A long day on Vancouver Island ended with the sudden visit of relatives. Near-panic set in. Frieda suggested that Jake take a half-dose of valium when he saw company arriving, and Anna take the other half when they left. They refused. They worried about addiction.

In January 1982, he took Frieda with him to the bank and explained his finances. They also visited the lawyer's and accountant's offices. He also showed her his secret hiding place for bank books and safety deposit box keys. Old habits begun in Russia and forged solid in Blaine Lake die hard. Frieda arranged for a community services woman to be available for problems with heating, plumbing, cleaning, health, business, etc. Although Anna was happiest in her kitchen, she tired more easily. Jake no longer took his daily walks. They vaguely considered moving to a retirement center. Life was closing in on them.

One morning, Jake took Anna to the bank to introduce her to the world of finance and the staff. She was about 87 and he a year younger. She had never written a check in her life so he had much to explain. "I want you to know my wife in case I go," he told the bank clerk.

"Where are you planning to go, Mr. Funk?"

Anna replied with a laugh: "He thinks he's leaving this world."

Whenever he went to the bank, he checked and double-checked everything.

The war and revolution stories stopped entirely because his nights relived the former agony too vividly. He hated pain and suffering, feared it for others and for himself. In letters he mentioned sick relatives, "I hope they don't have to suffer." Church attendance became more infrequent, Jake's excuse being he couldn't sit that long. He was becoming claustrophobic, at times almost to the point of panic. When he went to church, he sat in an aisle seat, then in the back row, finally by the back door. And finally, not at all. Special holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas were particularly difficult and lonely for Jake and Anna.

On rare occasions he still took a brief walk downtown, but Anna got out less frequently. She refused to go visiting because Jake too often pushed the panic button and became sick and they had to return home.

Insomnia was a problem, so on one trip Frieda bravely bought them a winter's supply of wine, brandy, and a liqueur and little glasses. When she poured some into the glasses, Jake promptly pulled the drapes so the neighbors wouldn't see this once-upon-a-time teetotaler imbibe. "Let's not tell others about it," said Anna, but they all slept soundly that night. A visit to the doctor brought a prescription for a mild sedative for Anna and kidney pills for Jake. Her knees were bothering her, making walking and housework difficult, so she hired a woman to do the heavier housecleaning. It was becoming increasingly clear that a change in housing was in the offing. The garden was shrinking each year and the row of raspberry bushes becoming shorter. Church attendance was now via a telephone/radio home broadcast.

They valued highly visits from children and grandchildren as well as other relatives. His concern for the children was paramount at all times. Anne and Frieda, in particular, visited as often as possible to take them to doctors, stock up on staples, and look after other immediate matters that needed attention. Regular travel from Edmonton to Clearbrook over the Rocky Mountains was becoming more difficult. Should they look for a nursing home in Clearbrook or move closer to the two daughters in Edmonton? Being closer would give the children better peace of mind. They would have to decide.

As the extended family grew, it also meant ever more crises in the children's lives to deal with. Son Jack had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1970. In September 1981, his wife Joyce died of cancer. When not quite a year later he announced his decision to marry Patricia Unger, a divorced woman with five children, Jake's value system was shaken to the roots. His only son was marrying a divorced woman. Yet the experience of meeting her erased all objections. He wrote: *Yes, we met Pat. She is tall like Joyce, friendly, free to talk to.* Pat wrote me later he had dared to tell her "We like you" when she and Jack left. Anyone who cooked *borscht* couldn't be half bad.

In spring of 1982 the decision was made to move to Edmonton to be closer to Frieda and Henry Schroeder and Anne and Wes Kruger.

Roosekueaken

Mennonite housewives in Ukraine used hartshorn (ammonium carbonate), a leavening agent that was the precursor to baking powder and baking soda. It worked only in small items, like cookies, that allowed the gas to escape in baking. It produced a light, airy product, much treasured by these cooks, who made such cookies in large amounts. In the early years in Blaine Lake, Mother made ammonia cookies, somewhat similar to this recipe, probably because they reminded her of Russia. They were a delicate white and, when iced, tasted heavenly. I made the following recipe for several years but finding baking ammonia became a problem.

This recipe was given to me by a friend, who shall remain anonymous, about 55 years ago. I had to swear I wouldn't tell anyone where I got it, for the woman who had given it to her was determined to maintain exclusive bragging rights to it. I have since seen versions of it in Mennonite cookbooks. I found this recipe too labor intensive for my busy life, so I soon abandoned it for simpler recipes.

* * * * *

2 cups sugar
2 cups milk
1 cup butter
2 eggs
3 tsp baking powder
2 tbsp baking ammonia
About 8–9 cups flour
Strawberry jam
Strawberry flavored icing

Make a soft dough. Roll about ¼ inch thick. Cut in circles and spread strawberry jam on half of each circle and fold over. Pinch together. Bake in 375 degree oven for 10–12 minutes. Do not let the cookies get brown. Ice with strawberry flavored icing or dip in a glaze.

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The final journey

The decision to move to Edmonton to be nearer to Frieda and Henry Schroeder and Anne and Wes Kruger took more than five years to make. After Jake decided not to drive any more, encouraged in this decision by family members, he and Anna lost their independence and ties to the outside world. Jack encouraged us siblings to keep mentioning in letters how we accepted rides from others. It was not demeaning to allow others to help us. Henry Giesbrecht, a relative of Anna's, agreed to keep an eye on them. But going to church held less appeal. Staying home was easier and also harder.

When I visited Clearbrook in 1984, I found Jake and Anna considerably slower. Jake's legs were weakening so that he found walking any distance difficult. His former vigorous stride was gone. He was convinced this was my last visit to him alive. Life was closing in and he was helpless to keep the walls from moving toward him. The illness and death of a close relative without the comfort of faith in God, had been hard on him. He found it hard to see this couple stranded in this time of need with only the resources of the Church of Scientology to support them.

Jake clung to his faith in God through sheer habit as the darkness deepened around him. The terror was no longer the fear of revolutionaries bursting into the house with sabers swinging and revolvers cocked. It was no longer the fear of hunger or of not having enough money to pay the bills. It had become the growing awareness of the mystery of the great unknown beckoning him and Anna, and the fear of whether they would have the inner and physical resources to cope. Anna mentioned that sometimes when the loneliness and helplessness of their situation overwhelmed them, they grabbed one another, thankful they still had each other. "We just stand and hold on to one another." It was a matter of "Lord, we believe. Increase our faith and carry us over

this wide, troubled Jordan." With some people, memories become hard packed over time, almost impossible to retrieve. With Jake, the layers of past experiences were separating and intruding into the present.

His former stamina declined rapidly as his body and mind deteriorated. Earlier, he had written to encourage me when my husband died at age 44: *Chin up, life is a struggle. We are getting old, too. I wouldn't want to live my life over again (Psalm 71:18–19). We don't worry. We are ready. We've had our life. We are glad not to be vegetables in a mental hospital or invalid home.* But now that he no longer felt he was contributing to life, his psyche withered. It was no longer a question whether he was old or not. He was old.

Frieda and Henry agreed to investigate senior housing in Alberta. But Jake immediately voiced a concern about a possible move to Edmonton. He saw a lion behind every blade of grass. Was it legal to move from one province to another? His thoughts kept reverting to Ukraine during the Revolution, when travel restrictions were imposed on the colonists. He did not want to do anything that might border on illegality or involved coercion.

Jack encouraged each of us siblings to write asking Jake for his opinion on specific matters and to make him feel more involved in their lives. "It is in this way that Dad and Mom can feel they are making a contribution to our lives," he wrote. The final decision to move elsewhere must be theirs, but it didn't hurt to add a little persuasion.

How and when the final decision to move was made is not clear, but in April 1984, the house on Fir Avenue in Clearbrook went on the market and soon had a buyer. However, that first house deal fell through when the buyer couldn't get a loan. Jake was not disturbed—in fact, he was almost relieved. The big move might not happen. Maybe they could stay in B.C. But plans to move to Edmonton were forming. Daughter Anne paid a deposit on an apartment for them in a senior high-rise building.

He wrote: *We haven't sold the house yet. Some come and look but the right one hasn't come yet. We had sold it for $48,000, but the purchaser couldn't get a loan, so the deal was canceled. If we can't sell, we must stay. So don't worry about us. We are OK. If we can sell the house, we will move. Tom and Bill* [grandsons] *are willing to help us move. We can't take much along because the apartment we rented is very small, half the size of our house. In Edmonton housing is very short—long waiting lists all over.*

To be entitled to senior citizen low renting privileges in Alberta, you have to live there for one year. The suite we rented is in a Baptist senior citizen manor home—German Baptist, also a church. It is a big change. Who likes a big change? A

Clearbrook man told us that in Clearbrook about 500 homes are for sale. One real estate agent said he alone had about 60 listings. People come and look. Don't say anything. If we had fancy, rich furniture, rugs, etc., to make it look rich, maybe it would appeal better. If it is God's will, he'll make a buyer come. We don't worry, sleep good every night. But he did worry.

Anna didn't yield as quickly to a temporary setback. In Clearbrook, she started getting rid of household items, giving them away to grandchildren, neighbors, the cleaning lady, thrift stores, displaced persons, anyone. She was ready to go, yet despite his positive language in letters, Jake's anxieties grew sky-high. Once again, he might be required to turn his back on something before he had a new clear plan ahead of him. His tolerance for risk was zero. But the decision had been made to move. The tide was against him. It felt like a tsunami.

Henry and Frieda planned to leave Edmonton early Saturday, May 26, with a Sunday evening arrival in Clearbrook. After loading the rental truck the next day, they planned to take two days for the return trip. Henry and son Tom planned to take turns driving the truck with Frieda following in their car. Someone would bring Jake and Anna to the Vancouver airport on Sunday where Jack, on a quick turn-around flight from Saskatoon, would await them to accompany them by air to Edmonton. Here Anne and Wes would be waiting to take them to their home. The flight was only about an hour and twenty minutes. At no point would they have to test their own physical and emotional resources alone.

The plans were well made, yet Anna was unsure what Jake might do. His nerves were frazzled to the breaking point. The realtor had assured them the house would sell soon—good location, well-kept, reasonable price, strong market—but Jake was terrified about leaving without the security of the proceeds of the house in his bank account. He could only think about the endless possibilities of what might happen if he lacked resources to support himself and Anna.

In the Edmonton airport, when Jake was rolled into the waiting area in a wheelchair, my sister was shocked to watch him undo a safety pin on a pants pocket and pull out a huge wad of bills wrapped in a handkerchief in full view of other passengers, carefully counting it to assure himself it was still all there before returning it to his pocket. Had he emptied his bank account before leaving? Did he fear he couldn't transfer money from one province to the other? The mindset of the Mennonite villagers at the mercy of the revolutionaries decades before in anarchistic Russia had overpowered him. Life had returned to that insecure time when no financial institution could be trusted. He did not

know what their new home looked like nor how they would manage. The move was taking a high toll on his emotional stability.

The rental truck with the furniture arrived in due time, and Jake and Anna, now in their late eighties, moved into the tiny apartment to begin another new chapter in their lives, with trash disposal and laundry facilities down the hall, mail at the front entry, eleven stories down, and close neighbors on all sides. The apartment was small but adequate with a compact bedroom, kitchen and dining area, living room, and bath.

Once again they were immigrants, not with a tin cradle bearing the samovar and diapers, but a rental truck bearing a small household of goods—including the samovar and a multitude of mixed memories and established patterns of living and thinking. Henry Schroeder helped them purchase a new sofa and chair and other items. Anne brought groceries and added food from her own rich supply of baked goods. Frieda wrote: *We knew Mom would take everything in stride, but we weren't too sure about Dad. He had given us some anxious moments and he's given Mom a very difficult time. The day before we arrived to move them to Edmonton he tried to talk Mom into staying. They would pay us $500 every time we came to visit them.*

Jake and Anna, now in their upper eighties, agreed to attend church with Anne and Wes Kruger at Mill Woods Mennonite Brethren Church, accompanying them on Sunday mornings. Frieda or Anne did their grocery shopping and Anne also continued to bring home-cooked food. Anna adapted to apartment living at once, for it meant fewer chores, although she clung to her traditional role of homemaker. Eventually she hired a woman to help with vacuuming and cleaning—and to drink tea with her. But to almost her dying day she always washed her own dishes. No guest would ever say she had had to wash the dishes in Anna's kitchen.

Jake had both reluctantly and gladly turned over his financial affairs to Henry Schroeder, a retired businessman, who now paid the bills and balanced the bank account. Jake perked up temporarily, even occasionally joking, only to sink deeper and deeper into depression. The eventual sale of the Clearbrook house raised his spirits temporarily, but textile painting no longer held his interest. Even cable television was boring. Jake didn't read. His and Anna's living space was smaller, but it took more and more resources to hang onto life. The voice that had once preached with passion and forthrightness was silent, the heart that had joined the children in singing on the way to church decades before now no longer had a song. He was bothered with prostate problems, temporarily taken care of with a surgical procedure.

When I or someone else arrived for a visit, his spirits perked up momentarily and he willingly entered the conversation or the reminiscing, only to return to his more usual taciturn behavior once the guest was gone. Even with a walker he was getting out less and less. Frieda wrote that he seemed almost resigned to his condition. In hindsight it seems he was suffering from clinical depression, but depression was not in the vocabulary of either Jake or Anna. You tough it out with faith and determination. Therapy, both medical and psychological, would probably have helped, but no one directed them to these resources.

Anne wrote me in 2002, several years after his death: *Dad never prepared for retirement and he never learned to socialize… You didn't see the ornery side of Dad after he retired; he always put on a good front when you or Sue would come. He suffered from severe depression and there was not much Mother could do. He would not take his medication; he said he had trouble swallowing the pills. He would oblige the doctors and get the medicine but not follow directions. It was very hard on Mother. In the end he was dependent on her like a child. Of course, she nourished that idea—now she had a purpose in living again. She cooked the foods that he liked. He refused to leave the apartment. He hadn't left it in months, but when you* [Katie] *came, I was surprised to see you and he walking the hallway—and on the first floor! He had much going for him, but he didn't know how to channel it into something worthwhile.*

When I came, I was a visitor; you made nice with visitors. Anne was family; you could be yourself with family.

At what point did Jake give up the struggle? When did life lose meaning? When did faith become a thread instead of the anchor? At some point he had become aware of the dark side of life, and for a while tried to bring light, but memories of the horrors of wholesale soul-destroying violence caused him to create a small room in his mind and crawl into it. He was never wounded in his body, but he was wounded nevertheless. Should I have made a stronger attempt to enter that hell and share it with him?

Anna relished the smaller Mill Woods congregation where she was honored as being the oldest member: "Grandma Funk." Jake felt less and less comfortable away from home. He wrote*: We are now in Edmonton. We have moved. We can't be alone anymore in B.C. We sold the house. We are old. We are glad it is over. We got very tired. We are OK. We have a nice suite. Alle Rosen welken* [All roses wilt]. *So do we.*

Jake and Anna had been privileged to celebrate several milestones during their life together: Their golden wedding anniversary with a celebration dinner and several days of family camp at Cultus Lake in

British Columbia in 1970. A smaller celebration on the occasion of their 65th anniversary now took place in Edmonton. Several children were celebrating 25th anniversaries, but then death descended like a flood. It stalked Jake on all fronts, both within their retirement apartment building where the sickest among the residents died from time to time, but also in his extended family.

Jake's mother, Susanna, had died in 1955 in Hague and my husband Walter in 1962, but now the extended family was shocked by the news that Peter Funk, the only son of Peter and Tina Funk, had been killed in a train/vehicle accident in Alberta in 1976 at age 52. John Funk, Jake's oldest brother, died in 1977 in Ontario followed by his second wife, Alice, the same year. Brother-in-law Jacob Janzen in Sardis, B.C., died in 1978. In 1981, another blow hit: Joyce, wife of son Jack, died in Battleford, Saskatchewan, after a lengthy battle with cancer. Cousin A.A. Shelly, with whom he had had a long-standing business and personal relationship, died in 1980, as did A.A.'s brother John J. Schellenberg, in 1984, followed by another brother, Peter Schellenberg, in 1985. Their father, Abram D. Schellenberg, had died in 1964 leaving a legacy of business acumen, financial holdings, and benevolence, but the Schellenberg dynasty was growing weaker. Jake's brother-in-law Abe Friesen in Hague died in 1981, and Uncle Johann Peters of Hague in 1982, followed by his brother Henry's wife Katie in 1983 and Henry in 1984 in Vancouver.

Each death tore a piece out of Jake's heart. His usual written comment was, "I hope they didn't have to suffer." He had great dread of human suffering. He had seen too much of it in his young adulthood, listening to wounded soldiers he was escorting to an army hospital groan in agony during the long trip, and sometimes die. As a young man, during a two-week period in 1920, he had nursed and been responsible for burying in makeshift graves four close relatives during the typhus epidemic. He had watched them breathe their last. It was a memory he never buried. In late 1984, daughter Anne, main caregiver together with Frieda, was diagnosed with colon cancer and underwent surgery. Would they also lose her?

Yet as Jake's physical condition deteriorated, he complained less and seemed almost resigned that his end was approaching. He seldom left the apartment, even to get the mail. Anna treated him with understanding and tenderness. She attended a nutrition lecture (on her own) and learned she was serving well balanced meals. Even though she was old, she maintained, her woman's work was never done. Husbands had to be fed and nurtured.

On February 25, 1986, Jake was rushed to the Royal Alexandria Hospital because he had suffered a mild stroke. During the 10 weeks he was hospitalized, his sense of humor occasionally rose to the occasion. One day a granddaughter said she was sorry for not having visited him that week because of illness. "Yes," he said, with a slight smile, "I was sick, too." He enjoyed all visitors. When he could no longer swallow, the doctors and family members clashed over using a gastric feeding tube. Frieda now headed the local care team, for Anne was still struggling with the aftereffects of her surgery a year earlier. Anne's husband had suffered a slight stroke and was in the same hospital. Jake became fearful, agitated, and convulsive, although his clear wish was that no heroic measures be taken.

In early March a cystoscopy revealed a prostate tumor. A bone scan proved negative, so at least the cancer had not spread. The pastor of the Mill Woods MB Church served Jake communion. Jake was ready for the final journey. A measure of peace came over him as he realized his end was near. Faith had conquered. The day before his death he recited clearly, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." He died May 7 at the age of 89 years and 10 months.

Before his death, Anna had phoned each child to ask our view of having our father's body cremated. The question came as a surprise, yet Anna was often ahead of her peers. Was it because she never knew where her parents and siblings were buried? That she had buried each one in her heart? The children all agreed, accepting her condition that on her death her body would also be cremated.

Jack reported: *The funeral went very well. The ministers from the MB church did their job, the singing was enthusiastic, and a couple sang a hymn in German. I don't know what more can be said. Dad looked very good as he lay there. He looked about twenty years younger, and that was a good image to take with me.* His troubled spirit was finally at rest. Six grandchildren were the honorary pallbearers.

No plans had been made as to the final resting place of Jake's cremains, although Petrofka Bridge, the Russian Baptist Church in Blaine Lake, and some place in Clearbrook were suggestions. The parking lot at Mill Woods MB Church was paved and a plaque placed in the lobby as a memorial gift to the church.

Then life moved on once again. Jack began the family newssheet *Die Funke Vindmuehl,* which provided an avenue for family members to share news and stories and for Jack to exercise his creativity and sense of humor even as his health deteriorated because of multiple sclerosis. Anna began life alone in the apartment, attending church with Anne and Wes.

She mentioned often she was thankful Jake had died before she did. She could cope. He wouldn't have.

Mom, Dad, and me at their apartment in Edmonton (1986) shortly before Dad died.

Her forward thinking at times amazed us children. On one occasion, when the family was discussing "living together before marriage," Jack insisted that unmarried couples would not sleep together in his house, although he admitted he didn't know what he would do if they had children living together before marriage. Anna, however, saw such a couple as being married, according to the Scripture, but not according to society. One flesh meant one flesh, forever. She particularly enjoyed being able to pick up the tab for Sunday lunch when the whole family—children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren—gathered in a restaurant on a Sunday after church. She was now the keeper of the purse—with Henry's help, for the first time in 66 years of married life. He wrote the checks, she signed them.

And yet life didn't move without more bumps in the road. In summer of 1989, on a trip to California, Frieda suddenly became seriously ill, forcing Henry to find ER. After a lengthy hospital stay, she was diagnosed with viral herpes encephalitis of the brain. It left her with some memory loss, nausea, weakness, and an inability to function well. Recovery would take a long time, the doctors said. Anne Kruger took over as the older sister in a reversal of roles. Frieda now looked to her as leader and herself the follower. She now looked after Anna's shopping,

correspondence, etc., and brought her to church, a welcome outing on Sundays.

But now it was Anna's turn to feel depressed as she watched her family deteriorating around her: Jack had MS; Wes Kruger was limping around because of his stroke; Frieda was improving, but only slowly. Anne's cancer had been treated surgically, but she was bothered by allergies and at times could hardly breathe. Anna decided she was the healthiest one in the lot. In January 1991, she brought her cane to church for the first time with the words "I am getting old." She was 96 and had to make several stops walking from the car to the church door.

She enjoyed family gatherings where she could sit back silently and watch her family interact. She was hungry for human companionship, even though Frieda phoned every morning and Anne came as often as possible. Frieda could not drive as yet. Every time I visited from Kansas, she commented that this was the last time we would see one another and wept. One time, when in her nineties, she added, "But life is still so sweet." Her life, though much diminished, still meant much to her. She knew it was time to leave this world, but she still found joy in it.

Changes came to the Mill Woods Church when various issues convinced Anne and Wes Kruger and their families and several other families to move their membership to the Greenfield Baptist Church, close to their home. Though they were charter members and had contributed significantly to the financial and spiritual welfare of the church body, they and other older members felt shoved aside with the new, aggressive "seeker-sensitive" pressures at Mill Woods (now called Sunrise Community Church). Mill Woods was hemorrhaging badly as alienated members left. One great-grandchild commented wryly, "Let's pull up the parking lot when we go!" They were leaving behind the memorial to Grandpa Funk and entering a new phase.

The next years for Anna in Edmonton became increasingly wearisome as her mobility decreased. She admitted to it. She could barely knit—possibly one row on an afghan each day. Her feet were swelling and she suffered from chronic heart failure. On December 16, 1993, she fell during the night and could not get up. In the morning, Frieda and Henry rushed her to emergency. The doctors checked her over, found nothing wrong, and sent her home. She would not use her Lifeline. She told an astonished social worker that she did not "believe" in Lifeline. She didn't want anything to interfere with the business of dying. When God called her home, she was ready to go.

Almost to the end, she was keenly aware of life around her. She kept up with the daily news, read her periodicals, and was a bit annoyed when

her children did not read them so that she could discuss them with her. At times, with one day following another without differentiation, she became confused as to the day of the week. Christmas 1993 was her last with her extended family at the Kruger home. This year they did not drive around to see the Christmas lights, always a joy. "This is all so beautiful," she had commented once. "Just think what heaven must be like—so much more beautiful." She missed Jake keenly and longed to be together again. Life with him had been hard. Without him, life was unbearably lonely.

After a few more nights spent on the floor beside her bed because she had fallen without her using her Lifeline, the doctor insisted she come to the hospital. "How will I get there?" "By ambulance." The young medic who came asked, "How are you feeling?" "That's a silly question. If I were feeling good you would not be here," Anna replied. This was her first time in the hospital in her 98 years of life. She found out finally what an IV was, but she was disappointed that she was in the hospital and not in heaven. She made the children promise they would not give up the apartment. She would return. Hospital food was not to her liking. She preferred homemade food, like Anne's.

In early March, I came from Kansas to spend nine days with her, relieving Anne for a time, and to move Anna to a rehab center, a difficult and puzzling move decreed by some higher government agency. I arrived at the hospital at the specified time in the early morning but found Anna's room empty. After much probing, I located her at the end of a long hall, alone, hunched over in a wheel chair, her meager belongings stacked on her lap. You don't need much when you are not long for this life. She looked wild-eyed and distraught, her thin, long white hair streaming behind her. The short-handed staff at the hospital hadn't had time to comb it—or feed her that morning. I traveled with her on the van to rehab.

At the admissions interview, the nurse asked, "Where do you expect to go when you leave this place?" She was prompt in her reply: "To be with the Lord." She was a pilgrim on this earth. She was ready to move on. The woman looked perplexed. She needed a street address to write on her form. It didn't take long for the staff to grasp that Anna was not rehabilitation material at her age. Teaching her to cook nutritional food and look after a household was out of the question. So she was returned to the hospital, like a mail package with a new forwarding address delivered by mistake.

where there is doubt,
I may bring faith,
where there is despair,
I may bring hope –
where there are shadows,
I may bring thy light &
and where there is sadness
I may bring joy.
st francis of assisi

Me with Mother in 1993.

The day came when keeping her apartment was no longer debatable. Home care was out of the question. The only other option was a nursing home. As Anne told Mother about what lay ahead, she also talked about the many good memories the apartment had held for them all—the year with Jake, the birthday parties, the suppers, and the many visits from friends and family. Yes, there were all those memories—she didn't have to give them up even if she moved again. Anna yielded to any decision that might be made. This was a time for letting go, not hanging on. She had never clung to any of her household furnishings with any kind of passion. Certainly not now. Anne remembered one very poignant moment. She noticed that Anna would look at her intently, then look away.

"What are you thinking about when you look at me like that?"

"That I still have you."

Anne replied, "We've come seventy years together, Mom. They have been good years." Anna smiled.

Sister Sue came from Kansas the following week and helped clean out the apartment. Each item, treasured for decades, held a memory. On Saturday, March 5, it was apparent death was imminent. Anna passed away quietly in Anne's presence. Family members in the area rushed to the hospital to say their farewells and to pray. After a funeral service, her body was cremated and the ashes buried at Battleford near Jack's river-bank home, where Jake's cremains were interred.

Her death was another step in ending a generation on the Funk side of the family. Jake had been nearly 91 at death, Anna nearly 99. Longevity was a gene they passed on to their heirs. Few of Jake's siblings were still alive. Anna's estate at death totaled $132,982.46, which, together with her remaining household goods, was divided equally among the five children. She had been a good steward of the funds Jake had left her, giving to charities and the church—and now again to the children. But both she and Jake left a lasting spiritual legacy to children, grandchildren, and great grand-children, more important than money and land.

Green Bean Soup

Thoughts of Mother bring back memories of green bean soup, made in summer when the beans were young and tender. We children had to stem and string the beans. I can still see her slicing them diagonally, probably the way her mother did it in Russia.

* * * * *

Cover a ham bone with water and cook gently for an hour. Remove scum.

Add 1 can green beans, or 2 cups fresh beans, sliced diagonally
2 medium potatoes, diced
1 medium carrot, sliced
2 stalks celery, diced
1 bay leaf
Several sprigs of summer savory
8–10 peppercorns

Add vegetables and spices to the soup stock and simmer until tender. Before serving, add ½ cup cream, either sweet or sour.

25

The gift of a legacy

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you (Exodus 20:12).

I am haunted by memories of my father. I can't let him go although he died more than two decades ago. Why record the life of a simple man who left no legacy of money and lands, built no institutions, voiced no exceptional social vision, or grasped unusual theological concepts? He only carried within himself a persistent hope for freedom of spirit, a hope that eluded him as he became more and more depressed in his later years.

I struggle with voice in writing about my father. I am used to using the first person point of view and placing myself front and center: "This is my life, my gift to you. Take what you want." How much of myself should or could I reveal in a story about another person intimately involved in mine? But this is his story, not mine.

In fiction writing, the main character always faces a hill to climb, a foe to vanquish. However, my writing about him would not be fiction, but an attempt at truth. Few people escape struggles in life. Life is not always kind. What was my father's main conflict? What dragons did he try to slay with his limited education and English language skills? What happened in the end when the frail old man, smiling weakly at visitors, and the person Mother lived with were two different persons? In old age he had become bitter and irritable. His clothes hung loosely on his once erect, stalwart frame as he slumped in an easy chair in silence for hours at a time. There had been sense and meaning in his life for decades, even direction, until he drowned in the meaninglessness of undiagnosed depression. Or was it post-traumatic stress disorder? Without meaning, joy fades. In his lifetime, loss of joy was defined as "spiritual weakness."

As he lay dying in the hospital, a nurse combed his naturally wavy hair straight back to keep it out of his eyes. When I entered his room, my

eyes always immediately looked at his face in the bed. I wanted to shout, "No. That's wrong! You've made my father into a different person." I wanted to find a comb and change it to his usual style, over his brow. But I resisted the impulse. The nurse had remade my father with a few sweeps of a comb, yet now I am revising my father also as I think about his life through selected memory.

Mother carried the weight of responsibility for Dad in his later years. She became his faithful companion and ready servant. All their married life, for more than 66 years, he had carried the weight of economic responsibility; now that he was declining, physically and emotionally, it was her turn to carry a different burden. Looking after him gave her purpose. She knew she could not die before him, for the only place he felt safe towards the end was in their tiny apartment—with her. Did they have a happy marriage? Open affection was not the norm in that transposed culture from Russia. I know they clung to one another in their old age. I know they loved one another and accepted the limitations of the one they had vowed to honor for a lifetime.

Many images of my father come from photographs. I see him and Mother frozen in this pose or that expression. In one picture he, a young man of about twenty, is standing assured in front of several dozen medical workers also in white garb at a meal break during World War I near a Russian field hospital. That's the way I recall him best. Front and center, a few inches taller than his coworkers, looking steadfastly forward. To have a photograph taken in those days, you stood still, very still, sometimes for a few minutes, face solemn, not moving a muscle. Yet when I think of my storekeeper father in real life I see him in deliberate actions, quickly flourishing a feather duster over a display, checking the door, pulling the clock chain in the evening before bedtime, blowing out lamps. Always quickly, quickly. Nothing hesitantly. Now in late life, everything was done hesitantly.

As my sister Anne and I sat beside him during his final illness, he roused from a coma briefly to mumble something about money in his pants pocket—to be sure to check them. His words came out distorted and weak. We understood only "pants" and "money." We plied him gently with questions but he became agitated when his drug-fogged mind sensed he wasn't getting through. We comforted him that we would find the money. Later, we went through all his pants and sweater pockets, but found nothing. What ancient memory prompted this concern?

In the last, wearisome years, with few stimulating experiences, memories of failures were crowding out memories of decisive forward action. In letters to me he admitted to being lonely and wishing he had

made better decisions in life. Now it was too late. He had made many good decisions once, but lost sight of them. I easily recall times when he pushed forward decisively, but was he afraid at the time, standing on a threshold, like I am sometimes afraid when I face something new?

As a young man he separated himself from the church of his childhood, the *Kirchliche* church, and found peace for his restless soul in the Mennonite Brethren, a more evangelical body, a move that meant a widening gulf between himself and the rest of his family, who remained with the traditional church. They couldn't understand his desperate hunger for inner peace. He knew that the "Brethren" were looked down upon by members of the traditional church. How had his siblings and parents received this bold move? How difficult had that passage to spiritual freedom been?

He made a major life change when he, Mother, and my two sisters migrated to Canada from Ukraine in 1923 with only 25 cents in his pocket to begin anew. Women never carried money. Place determines your understanding of yourself, but what if that place changes radically? What changes take place in one's being alongside change in domicile? He had "Russian blood" flowing in his Mennonite veins. Russian music, language, folkways resonated with him. Russia was his home. Moving from one place to another in the same country brings upheavals, but to pick up a few possessions, like a samovar, tin cradle, and some small photographs, to migrate to a new land where everything is new—language, customs, currency, weather, people—is a violent change. My parents were leaving behind the country that had nurtured them from birth but deserted them with the entrance of a new Bolshevik regime.

Sometime during the gut-wrenching upheaval of the Russian Revolution, which threw social, political, and religious life into indescribable turmoil, four close relatives died within two weeks because of widespread famine and typhus. He, as the oldest son at home, buried them single-handedly during a time of extreme dearth of lumber or tools to dig a grave, even a religious leader to pray over the dead. Somehow during this time he forgave a younger brother for having nearly caused his death by joining the White army, incurring the wrath of the Red Bolshevik army. Dad's account of near death by firing squad was difficult to share with us children.

This and other gruesome war stories were pushed deep down into his consciousness, only a few escaping occasionally in an unexpected moment. When he finally told my brother Jack the story of being crowded with other prisoners in a small cellar room, fully expecting to

be shot, he alluded only briefly to the reason for his imprisonment. How much more difficult was that process of forgiving?

In Canada, at some point, though he had been an ordained deacon and evangelist in Russia, he sidestepped that calling to become a lay minister alongside his work as a storekeeper to keep his family warm and fed. How much did he agonize over that decision? Now I wish I had asked him more questions when he was alive.

Somehow my father conveyed to me the importance of raging against injustice, even if silently, but without rancor. I recognize he divided the world into black and white with few shades of gray and couldn't see that, though he rebelled against tradition, he also fought for it. I remember him for his basic kindness to everyone. He never blustered, gossiped. At what point did he turn from a man living in hope to a man living in the bitter memories of the past? But why did he see his long eventful life as failure and not as growth? Was it physical illness? I resist calling it spiritual weakness.

We can neither destroy nor escape the past, cultural or personal. Today I look back on a Funk family history because his forebears and he and Mother made decisions, stumbled, and moved on, sometimes forward. And I honor them for it.

We honor parents when we recognize that they have been entrusted with a burden—to point the next generation toward God, the father-mother of us all. They stand in God's place before their children. My parents did this for me.

Walter Brueggemann points out that "land" in the Old Testament has both a literal and symbolic meaning.[29] It may mean actual turf that can be tilled, but it also means having a place, of being rooted, of not being homeless wanderers, exiles, sojourners. He defines land as space where important words are spoken that establish identity, define vocation and envision destiny. In this space, vows are exchanged, promises made, and demands issued. When the person with power forgets brothers and sisters, not only do they suffer but also the one who "lifted his heart over them" like the brothers of Joseph. In a home where the members value the family bond, the child, young or old, will have a sense of rootedness, of place, of firmness in life, of a place to speak important words, to form an identity, and to learn to care and share.

Family, however it is configured, is God's arrangement for human beings, God's method of continuing the relationship with our creator and with one another—a place where we learn about interdependence,

[29] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 2nd ed., Overtures to Biblical Theology (Fortress Press, 2002).

sharing, and caring. Compassion and caring have their roots in the family and are learned when family burdens get heavy.

A family does not begin with a marriage certificate, stove, refrigerator, a mattress on the floor, or even just the decision to live together. Family begins with the parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Family is part of a deeply flowing river. A "placed," not necessarily a "landed" family, brings with it the strength of stability of relationships and satisfies a human hunger for identity. Homeless refugees, illegal aliens, wandering from place to place, do not make history. My parents gave me a history I can share with the next generation: The windmill on the hill in Ukraine and the events that took place there, how my father found my mother's family lost during the Russian Revolution, and their longing to be restored to a place in the family and community. That history has high moments and low ones. To honor means to recognize that parents are one way that the glory and mystery of God are conveyed to the next generation. That is the burden of parents.

I recognize my parents in myself, their patterns of dealing with life, their gestures and physical traits. I honor them when I release them of all my grudges, hostilities, criticisms—from mistakes made in raising me. I honor my parents for what they were and forgive them for what they were not, as I hope my children will do the same for me. That is their legacy.

So here I lay a wreath of honor at the base of the tree where your ashes are buried, Dad and Mother. Through your life you gave me a rootedness, a strength, a place to stand. I will keep writing about your lives.

Portselkje

Portselkje were always made at New Year's in Russia and also my Blaine Lake home. Portselkje is a Low German word meaning to tumble over—and they do as they fry. As children, we learned a Low German verse in which we begged for not just one, but two, three, four, and five at the same time. That was our complete meal. In return we wished Mother the kingdom of heaven. My daughter still makes them, sometimes for a party on New Year's Eve, frying as the guests eat. Eating portselkje meant people were beginning anew.

* * * * *

2 pkg dry yeast
2 cups milk
½ cup butter
1 tsp salt
4 eggs
1 pound raisins
Flour for soft batter
Oil to fry fritters

Prepare yeast as directed on package. Warm milk slightly. Beat eggs until frothy. Add sugar and continue beating until thick and lemon-colored. Add liquids and eggs to the yeast. Add the raisins, washed in warm water, to the yeast and mix thoroughly. Add salt, melted butter, and enough flour to make a soft batter. Place in a warm place to rise. When risen to twice its size, drop tablespoons of the batter, not too much batter at a time or the inside won't cook properly, into hot oil 375 degrees. Fry quickly until a delicate brown. The family that eats *portselkje* together stays together.

Chronology of events

A quick guide to Russian and Canadian Mennonite history affecting the Funk family with specific Funk-related events in italics.

1530, 1562ff: Mennonites migrate from Holland to Prussia in search of religious freedom.

1786: Empress Catharine the Great of Russia issues an invitation to Mennonites in Prussia, proven agriculturalists, to settle in Ukraine, in southern Russia.

1789: 288 Mennonite families leave Danzig, Prussia, for Ukraine to found the Chortitza Mennonite Settlement. It becomes known as the Old Colony, or first colony. It included eight villages.

1789: Franz Peter Funck, married to Maria, moves from Gdansk, Poland, to the village of Kronsweide, near Zaporizhia, South Russia, on August 1. He registers as a farmer in 1803. His father Peter Funck comes at the same time.

Jacob Franz Funk, grandson of Franz Peter Funck, at some point moves to Neu-Osterwick in the Chortitza Colony.

1804: A second colony of Prussian Mennonites, known as the Molotschna Colony, is founded.

1874–1879: About 18,000 Mennonites migrate to North America, 10,000 to the United States and 8,000 to Canada, because of increased Russification and the institution of universal conscription.

1901: Johann Jacob Funk, son of Jacob Franz Funk, and wife Susanna Nick Funk and three sons—one of whom is my father, Jacob Johann, born in 1896—move to Orenburg District, Ural Mountains, returning to Rosenthal in the Chortitza

Colony in October 1904 with an additional daughter. Three more sons are born in Rosenthal.

1904–1905: Russo-Japanese War.

1905–1907: First Russian Revolution.

1912: On July 12, Abram D. and Margaretha Schellenberg and five sons leave Ukraine for Canada.

1914–1918: World War I. The war between Germany and Russia ends in 1917 with the onset of the Russian Revolution 1917–1919.

1914: Jacob Johann Funk, second son of Johann Jacob Funk, joins the medical corps of the Russian Red Cross as a conscientious objector.

1917: Tsar Nicholas II ousted by the Bolshevists. The next year, he, the Tsarina, and five children are assassinated.

1917: Johann Johann Funk and Jacob Johann Funk return to Rosenthal from military service.

1917–1921: Revolution and Civil war in Russia, rise of Lenin and Bolshevism to power.

1918: German occupation of Ukraine.

1918–1920: Reign of terror in Mennonite colonies under anarchists led by Nestor Makhno.

1919: Canadian government passes an Order-in-Council barring entry of Mennonites, Hutterites, and Doukhobors to Canada. Both the USA and Canada refuse to accept refugees from these pacifist religious groups, given both countries' experience with conscientious objectors in WW I.

1920: Johann Jacob Funk is imprisoned by the Red army and held hostage, but released.

1920: His son Jacob Funk is imprisoned by the Red army and released.

1920: Johann Jacob Funk is taken prisoner again by the Red army and escapes to Kronsthal, where his family has fled.

1920: Four deaths due to typhus occur in the first two weeks of January in Kronsthal where the Funk family is hiding: Jacob Funk's father Johann Jacob Funk, age 52, Johann Jacob Funk's in-laws Klaas Nickolai Peters and wife Elizabeth Peters, both age 73, their son Peter Nick Peters, age 30.

1920: Jacob Johann Funk and Anna Franz Janzen marry in Rosenthal. Jacob had met Anna, born in 1895, while both worked at the Bethania Hospital for the mentally ill.

1921: Jacob Funk goes hunting on foot for Anna's family, her parents Franz and Katharina Janzen and seven siblings, who fled during the Revolution and were lost for several years.

1921: Peter Funk is taken prisoner by the Red army and released.

1922: New Liberal government in Canada rescinds previous Order-in-Council barring entry of Russian Mennonites to Canada, opening the door for their emigration from Russia.

1922: Canadian Pacific Railway agrees to grant transportation credits to 3,000 Mennonite immigrants. Elder David Toews of Rosthern personally undersigns the promissory note for the loan. Eventually some 20,000 immigrate to Canada before Russia stops granting exit visas in 1929.

1922–1923: Feeding operations for about 40,000 people in Mennonite colonies in Ukraine begin by American Mennonite Relief Administration, forerunner of Mennonite Central Committee. Mennonites consider leaving Russia.

1923: In early summer, the first group of 750 Mennonites leaves Chortitza for Canada.

1923: Johann Johann Funk, wife Susanna, and children Henry and John, leave Russia on June 20, arriving in Quebec City on July 18, 1923.

1923: Jacob Johann Funk, wife Anna, and children Frieda and Annie, together with Jacob's younger brothers, Nick and Abe, leave Russia on July 2 and settle in Laird, Saskatchewan.

1923: On July 30, widow Susanna Nick Funk, with children Henry and Elizabeth, leaves Russia and settles in Hague, Saskatchewan.

1924: Lenin dies on January 21. Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) eliminates key leaders who oppose him and establishes himself as virtual dictator. He develops plans to further centralize Russian industry and agriculture called Five-year Plans and instigates the "Great Terror." Intellectuals, artists, entrepreneurs, agriculturalists, landowners, minorities, religious leaders, and those opposed or perceived to oppose his political views are arrested, imprisoned, and executed or exiled. Millions are killed or die from starvation and hardship during Stalin's reign of terror in forced labor camps and prisons. Eight of Anna Janzen Funk's siblings survived Stalin's purges in the Soviet Union.

1925: Jacob and Anna Funk move to Saskatoon in the spring of 1925, and to Bruno in fall of 1925.

1926: Peter Johann Funk, with wife Tina and son Peter, leaves Russia on October 30, 1926.

1928: Jacob and Anna Funk and four children move to Blaine Lake, where Susie is born in 1929.

1929: Year of the Big Fire in Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan.

1929: Stock market crashes, ushering in the Great Depression.

1929: Jacob and Anna Funk become Canadian citizens.

1930: Jacob and Tina Funk, cousins of Jacob Funk, and their two daughters arrive in Canada, some of the last Mennonite refugees to leave Russia.

1930–1939: The Great Depression brings drought, dirt, grasshoppers, and economic hardships.

1939–1945: World War II for the British Commonwealth, including Canada.

1944: Frieda Funk marries Henry Schroeder.

1945: Jacob Funk resigns as manager of the OK Economy Store in Blaine Lake and moves temporarily to Saskatoon.

1946: Jacob and Anna and daughter Susan return to Blaine Lake as owners of the store, now a Shop-Rite store. The three oldest daughters and son have already left home.

1946: The *Reiseschuld* (travel debt) of $1,947,398.68 owed to the Canadian Pacific Railway for transportation costs of the Mennonites who left Russia for Canada during the 1920s is finally paid in full.

1947: Daughter Katie marries Walter Wiebe.

1947: Daughter Anne marries Wesley Kruger.

1952: Son Jack marries Joyce Miner.

1953: Daughter Susan marries Harold Kruger.

1953: Joseph Stalin, dictator of USSR, dies of a heart attack. Restrictions on citizens are eased. Mennonites are allowed to move out of Siberia and northern regions, but not back to Ukraine.

1955: Susanna Funk, matriarch of the Funk family, age 83, dies in Rosthern, Saskatchewan.

1966: Jacob and Anna sell the Shop-Rite Store in Blaine Lake and retire to Clearbrook, British Columbia.

1970: Jacob and Anna Funk celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary at Cultus Lake, with most members of the extended family in attendance.

1978: Truda Janzen Koop, one of Anna Funk's younger sisters, visits Canada as a repatriated citizen of Germany (Umsiedler). She is the only sibling Anna was privileged to see face to face again, with the exception of brother Jacob who also came to Canada in 1926.

1984: Jacob and Anna move to Edmonton, Alberta, to live in a small apartment in a high-rise senior citizens facility.

1985: Jacob and Anna celebrate 65 years together.

1986: Jacob Funk dies of a stroke at age 90 after a lengthy illness. The family contributes money to pave the church parking lot in his honor.

1994: Anna Funk dies at nearly 99 years of age after a lengthy illness.

Funk Family Tree

Mennonite children always had a given name and a patronymic (father's given name) so that people always knew which branch of the family the child belonged to. This tradition was lost in Canada. The same name appearing twice in a list of children signifies that the first child died and the name was given to another child. Both children and adults had many nicknames to keep them identified.

1. Peter Fun(c)k (?–?) + ?

2. Franz Peter Fun(c)k (1769–1834) + Maria Janzen (1775–1836)
Children: **Franz** (1797–1862), Johann (1799–1836), Eva (1804–?), Helena (1806–1816)

3. Franz Franz Funk (1797–1862) + Anna David Neufeld (1793–1862)
Children: Susanna, Maria, Anna, Franz, Johann**,** Franz, Susanna, **Jacob**, Eva

4. Jacob Franz Funk (1835–1904) + Susanna Jacob Dahl (1837–1904)
Children: Susanna, Jacob, Franz, Susanna, Katharina, Johann, **Johann**, Heinrich, Kornelius, Anna, Helena, Maria, Peter

5. Johann Jacob Funk (1867–1920) + Susanna Nickolai Peters (1872–1955)
Children: Susanna (deceased), Johann, **Jacob**, Peter, Elizabeth, Henry, Nickolai, Abram

6a. Johann (John) Johann Funk (1893–1977) + Susanna Heinrich Pankratz (1892–1948)
2nd marriage to Alice T. Bird in 1955*; Children* from 1st marriage: Henry, John, Alvin

6b. Jacob (Jake) Johann Funk (1896–1986) + Anna Franz Janzen (1895–1994)
7a. (El)frieda Funk (1921–2009) + Henry Schroeder (1918–)
Children: Robert (deceased), Margaret Louise (deceased), Thomas J.

7b. Anna (Annie, Anne) Yacovlena Funk (1923–2009) + L. Wesley Kruger (1924–)
Children: Franklin R., Nancy J., Neal H.

7c. Katie Funk (1924–) + Walter W. Wiebe (1918–1962)
Children: Joanna K., Susan H., Christine R. (deceased), James P.

7d. Jacob (Jakie, Jack) Funk (1927–2010) + Joyce Miner (1926–1981)
2nd marriage to Patricia Earles in 1982; *Children* from 1st marriage: Jo-Ann, Jacki-Lynn, Jonathan R., Leslie J., Kathryn R.

7e. Susan Frances (Susie, Sue) Funk (1929–) + Harold Kruger (1929–)
Children: Rebecca J., Patricia G., Grace E.

6c. Peter Johann Funk (1900–1987) + Katarina (Tina) Knelsen (1901–1994)
Children: Peter (Pat) (deceased), Velma

6d. Elizabeth (Liese) Johann Funk (1903–1996) + Abram (Abe) Friesen (1903–1981)
Children: Eileen (Stella)

6e. Heinrich (Henry) Johann Funk (1905–1984) + Katharina (Katie) Dyck (1908–1983)
Children: John, Elvera (deceased), Anita Louise

6f. Nickolai (Nick) Johann Funk (1908–1986) + Katherina (Kay) Isaak Dyck (1908–1991)
Children: Joyce, Robert A., Donald G. (deceased), Garry (Douglas)

6g. Abram (Abe, Ab) Funk (1911–1997) + Kay Janzen (1913–? ; divorced in 1953)
2nd marriage to Edna Wells (1910–1996)

Acknowledgments

I grew up at the intersection of daily life and storytelling. Without either this book would never have materialized. I am indebted to all those in the family who lived their lives deeply and told stories about them, especially my father, his brothers Abe and Peter, and my cousin Henry Funk, caretaker of family records. I look back with joy to the times my siblings and I told hilarious stories about our growing up and how, each time, we realized anew the rich heritage entrusted to us. I am grateful for the patience of my children Joanna, Susan, and James listening to me talk about this project. I thank Leona Wiebe Gislason who read some early chapters and Margot Stauffer Wiebe who transcribed my grandmother's scrawled German account of the journey to Canada, a task beyond my skills. I am grateful to Jon Isaak for his skillful editing in bringing this book to completion when I was ready to call a halt. A book is never one person's accomplishment—always that of a host of people.

"Once again, the storekeeper's daughter has mined her rich store of family stories to explore universal themes of love and loss and yearning."

—**Valerie G. Rempel**, professor, Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary

"Don't be fooled—this is not just a family history or a devoted daughter's tribute to her father. This is Mennonite drama at its best, deftly and vibrantly told by one of its most cherished writers."

—**Wally Kroeker**, editor of *The Marketplace*

"The recipes with Low German titles at the end of each chapter bring authenticity and realism to the book, especially when Katie describes how she continues to use them."

—**Linda Huebert Hecht**, author of *Women in Early Austrian Anabaptism*

"Born in 1924, Katie is able to reach far back to capture a textured oral history that spans church squabbles and family drama, artistically weaving it into a well-researched memoir."

—**Jake Buhler**, Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan

For more than sixty years Katie Funk Wiebe has written for the church, encouraging and challenging several generations to think more deeply about their faith and to walk more faithfully with God. She has published over two thousand articles, columns, and book reviews, and written or edited more than twenty books. Particularly adept at opening her life to others and "wrapping words" around her thoughts, questions, doubts, and struggles, Katie has chosen in this book to tell the story of her father, Jacob J. Funk.

ISBN-13: 978-1-894791-41-0
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